

# To the Last Breath

## Dhamma Talks on Living and Dying

by  
Venerable Acharn Maha Boowa Ñanasampanno

Edited by  
Bhikkhu Ariyesako

### READ PART 2 - Directions for Insight

"... the Buddha said that it wasn't important which day we die.  
Whenever the breath runs out, that is the day.  
The only criterion is our last breath..."

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### Editor's Preface □

This book contains two sets of newly revised Dhamma talks. The 1980 edition of *Amata Dhamma* has been completely revised and has new additions, including its new title, *To the Last Breath. Directions for Insight* — the second part of this book — was only slightly revised, although it now has its proper title back, which somehow had become lost in the first printing. (It was then printed as *Directing to Self Penetration*.)

As Acharn Panyavaddho explained in the introduction he wrote for the 1980 *Amata Dhamma*: "(six) of these (seven) talks were given for the benefit of Mrs. Pow-panga Vathanakul, who had been staying in Wat Pa Bahn Tahd, Udorn-thani, Thailand, since the beginning of November 1975. The other talk, *The Middle Way (of Practice)*, was actually given to the assembly of *bhikkhus* at the Wat in 1962, and was one which Mrs. Pow-panga found useful... She stayed at Wat Pa Bahn Tahd for almost four months and Ven. Acharn Maha Boowa gave about 130 talks during that period."<sup>1</sup>

The second part of this collection, *Directions for Insight*, seems to fit in well with the general approach of *To the Last Breath*. (In fact, both have the same flavor — the taste of freedom — which is the true *liberation* of heart, without regard to gender, race or age.) It is made up of six Dhamma Talks by Acharn Kor Khao-suan-luang. Khun Phoon Phongphanit, a lay disciple of Acharn Kor, suggested a joint translation (with the editor) of these six Dhamma talks,<sup>2</sup> originally printed (in Thai) under the title *Na Naew Mong Darn Ny*. They form one booklet of a series printed over the years by Upasika Kee Nanayon, who used the pen name *Kor Khao-suan-luang*. Khun Phoon Phongphanit should receive special thanks for all his work in seeing that translation into print.

The first translation of *To the Last Breath* (or *Amata Dhamma* as it was then) was mainly the work of Ven. Bhikkhu A-j-. The present editor, who also assisted at that time, has now completely revised the whole translation and so must bear responsibility for the errors.

Any merit arising from my work on this book, may it be dedicated to my mother. May she find peace and happiness.

A. Bhikkhu

## Notes

**1.** For more about this, see the new section: *Epilogue*. Other translations of similar Dhamma Talks by Ven. Acharn Maha Boowa are: *Straight from the Heart*; *Things As They Are*; *Forest Dhamma*; *The Dhamma Teaching of Acariya Maha Boowa in London*; *Kammatthana*.

**2. Please note** that this year (1995) a new translation of four of these Talks has appeared, which, to a certain extent, supersedes this pioneer translation. They are contained in a superb collection of Acharn Kor's Dhamma entitled *An Unentangled Knowing, The Teachings of a Thai Buddhist Lay Woman*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Dhamma Dana Publications, c/o Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 149 Lockwood Road, Barre, Massachusetts 01005, USA.) They can also be found in electronic format on many Buddhist BBSs.

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## Introduction □

Anyone who has visited the *forest monasteries* of Thailand will need no introduction. They will have seen *Acharns*<sup>1</sup> who teach in a spontaneous and direct way, and who live as they teach. This is *Forest Dhamma*, vigorous but without pretension, inspiring one to live and practice the *Way* rather than reading about it. Yet here is a book — and a *translation* of a book at that — that can only attempt to offer a partial view of certain aspects of that Teaching.

This is especially so with the first part of this collection of Dhamma talks, *To the Last Breath*. For these were given under quite special circumstances: A person, quite knowledgeable about Buddhism, is dying of cancer. The emphasis is therefore very much on dealing with pain, suffering and, finally, death. And pointing towards that which is *beyond* suffering and death.

These circumstances mean that the beginning fundamentals of Dhamma practice are generally assumed to be already understood. (Khun Pow and the other listeners were already well practiced in developing Dhamma in their actions and speech.)<sup>2</sup> For those new to Dhamma, however, it is important to remember the special context and to take into account the other Dhamma qualities that make an essential foundation that will need to be cultivated. The Lord Buddha gave an important example of this when he would begin his Dhamma Teaching (to those newly interested) with the *Progressive* or *Graduated Sermon*.<sup>3</sup>

*"Then the Lord delivered a graduated discourse to 'Kutadanta,' on generosity, on morality and on heaven, showing the danger, degradation and corruption of sense-desires, and the profit of renunciation. And when the Lord knew that Kutadanta's mind was ready, pliable, free from the hindrances, joyful and calm, then he preached a sermon on Dhamma in brief: on suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path..."*<sup>4</sup>

It is this '*joyful, calm, pliable, ready mind*' — already settled firmly upon foundations of generosity and morality — that is receptive to the powerful Truths about pain, suffering and death. It is at this point that the emphasis changes to energetic striving, to overcoming the obstacles that prevent insight and pin us blindly to the wheel of birth and death.

*"Then the Lord said to the monks: 'Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay — strive on untiringly.' These were the Tathagata's last words."*<sup>5</sup>

In this book you will find both these aspects. There are constant references to 'gradually'... 'steadily'... 'step by step'... 'level by level' (of the *Graduated Teaching*). These lead into a growing emphasis on earnestness and diligence in practice.

Any translation is the impossible search for just the *right* word. The expression that conveys both the sense and accuracy in a pleasing way; and that also brings with it the spirit of the original. This translation is much more of a blind groping. First, there is the wide language and cultural gap between Thai and English. Then there is the change of medium from the living word to the printed page, which must always lose the dynamism of the original experience.<sup>6</sup> Finally, and perhaps the most important point, there is the great profundity of Dhamma, which is really beyond the translators' level of understanding. The reader will therefore need to make due allowance for the deficiencies in this translation effort. The only way truly to understand is to translate it back into your own life, your own experience and practice.

Even with its errors and inadequacies this book is the result of a great effort by many people. It will have all been worth while if a single person finds some truth in it that can help him or her face up to their situation, their

illness and pain. Insight into that suffering may they go beyond a mere book's description to true liberation.

#### Notes

1. Meditation Teachers.
2. See *Epilogue*.
3. *Anupubbikatha*. Also see the Appendix.
4. *Thus Have I Heard*. Page 141/29. (D.i.148) (Maurice Walshe, trans.; London: Wisdom Publications, 1987.)
5. *ibid.*, p. 270/67. (D.ii.156).
6. To help with these points, Pali terms have been kept to a minimum or put in the *Glossary*. Repetitions — which spoken Thai delights in with its musical variations of words and phrases; and which also serve to reinforce the Dhamma themes — have sometimes been deleted.

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## Part One □

# To the Last Breath Dhamma Talks on Living and Dying

by

**Venerable Acharn Mahaa Boowa Nyanasampanno**  
**of**  
**Wat Pa Bahn Tahd**  
**Udorn-thani, N.E. Thailand**

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### Biographical Note □

Venerable Acharn Maha Boowa was born in Udorn-thani, North-east Thailand in 1913. He became a monk in the customary way at a local monastery and went on to study the Pali language and texts. At this time he also started to meditate but had not yet found a suitable Teacher. Then he caught sight of the Ven. Acharn Mun and immediately felt that this was someone really special, someone who obviously had achieved something from his Dhamma practice.

After finishing his *Grade Three Pali studies*<sup>1</sup> he therefore left the study monastery and followed Ven. Acharn Mun into the forests of N.E. Thailand. When he caught up with Ven. Acharn Mun, he was told to put his academic knowledge to one side and concentrate on meditation. And that was what he did. He often went into solitary retreat in the mountains and jungle but always returned for help and advice from Ven. Acharn Mun. He stayed with Ven. Acharn Mun for seven years, right until the Ven. Acharn's passing away.

The vigour and uncompromising determination of his Dhamma practice attracted other monks dedicated to meditation and this eventually resulted in the founding of Wat Pa Bahn Tahd, in some forest near the village where he was born. This enabled his mother to come and live as a nun at the monastery.

Ven. Acharn Maha Boowa is well known for the fluency and skill of his Dhamma talks, and their direct and dynamic approach. They obviously reflect his own attitude and the way he personally practiced Dhamma. This is best exemplified in the Dhamma talks he gives to those who go to meditate at Wat Pa Bahn Tahd. Such talks usually take place in the cool of the evening, with lamps lit and the only sound being the insects and cicadas in the surrounding jungle. He often begins the Dhamma talk with a few moments of stillness — this is the most preparation he needs — and then quietly begins the Dhamma exposition. As the theme naturally develops, the pace quickens and those listening increasingly feel its strength and depth.

The formal Dhamma talk might last from thirty-five to sixty minutes. Then, after a more general talk, the listeners would all go back to their solitary huts in the jungle to continue the practice, to try to find the Dhamma they had been listening about — inside themselves.

## Note

1. On completion of *Grade Three Paali*, one is given the title *Mahaa*. There are nine grades in all.

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### 1. Ready to Go : Ready to Die □

This heart of ours is much like a child. The child is unable to take care of itself and so has to depend on mother and father, on guardians and nursemaids, holding on to various people. But the child at least has parents and guardians to look after it, to make sure it seldom meets with harm. Whereas although the heart is always grasping and clinging to various things, it doesn't find any such safety and security.

The heart can't rely on itself and therefore always likes to cling onto things. For the most part, it tends to reach for wrong things, for things that do it harm. The reason it likes to search for and hold on to things, is so that it can find safety, security and comfort for itself. The things it clings to however, are not dependable and so they pose a constant danger for the heart. Whether we are children or already grown up, this is the way our minds tend to be.

Instead of trying to rely on ourselves we always put our hopes in other things, other people. *We can't stand on own two feet*. This is because the heart isn't wise enough to check whether the objects it grasps hold of are right or wrong, good or bad. It doesn't know how to care for itself, how to help itself, because there's no one to teach it. There's nobody to advise on how to know which things are dangerous and which are beneficial, which things should be held on to and which things shouldn't. The heart therefore continues indiscriminately to grasp hold of anything, whether good or bad, as long as it likes the look of it. Even if it isn't gratifying, the heart's characteristic trait is still to keep on grasping and clinging. Why should it be like this?

Normally, one wouldn't think that a mood<sup>1</sup> or a thing that's displeasing is worth clinging to. Yet the heart continues to grasp hold of such things. It clings to anger, to delusion and lust, hatred and disgust, because it becomes involved and caught up in them. We can never say that the heart simply knows an object, for it always gets caught up in it and clings to it. For the most part, those things have nothing good in them.

Why does the heart have to go and grasp at things? It's because it is attracted without realizing the repercussions of its attachment. Even though you may wish to break away from it you can't, because there's something else which is powerful enough to force the heart to grasp and hang on. The object then becomes caught up in emotions, which continually overcloud and obscure yourself. Here we're talking about emotional objects<sup>1</sup> and moods.

Now I'll speak about material objects. The heart will grasp at and cling to whatever object is present. It doesn't matter how trifling or significant, how valuable or worthless it might be; the heart can and will attach itself. We wouldn't be wrong if we were to call the heart an expert 'hanger-on'. This is because it's still unable to rely on itself, and so must depend on outside things, until the end of the body that has led one through the changing situations. It may even forget itself by surrendering to the power of external objects, even though their control is baseless and leads the wrong way.

The Lord Buddha taught that, "*self is the protector of self*".<sup>2</sup> Try to cure the heart of its dependency, of the tendency it has of always hoping to rely on other things. Disengage yourself from such objects and turn inward to rely more on your own resources and abilities. Don't depend on your parents, friends and others, so much that you forget yourself. Our human trait of continually seeking support in other people develops eventually into a personal habit. It's like this all over the world, and in this regard we can hardly even measure up to some kinds of animals. This, then, is why the Lord Buddha taught about self-reliance.

In our commonplace and coarse affairs, like work and other such responsibilities, we should try to be more self-reliant. Coming in towards Dhamma — the practice of meditation in the heart — we need to have had sufficient training under a Teacher to know the right direction in which to proceed. The actual practice though, is the duty of each one of us, to find assurance in our self-reliance following the principles of Dhamma. The Lord Buddha taught, for example, about cultivating goodness and virtue through generosity, *precepts*<sup>3</sup> and meditation. This is so that we can develop self-reliance, which is the heart firmly holding to good and wholesome objects. There is then peace and happiness in both the present and future lives, because they are beneficial things and originate from wholesome actions. They make up fine objects or superior quality food for the heart.

We are taught to meditate, which is a step higher in refinement. This effort to train ourselves in meditation is a way of self-reliance that is steadily taken onto a firmer and more dependable level. We use a *meditation-word*<sup>4</sup> as the means to direct and control the heart. For, as the mind is not yet able to sustain itself, we have to rely on the meditation-word as the object to soothe and bring peace and calm. The settling of the mind in "*buddho buddho buddho...*" is one example of this. It is an object for the heart to occupy itself with, which is correct and right and appropriate to finding refuge in Dhamma.

In the beginning of the practice the heart is still restless and distracted, still unable to settle itself on Dhamma principles and become self-reliant. It has to depend on a meditation-word to direct it until it merges in with that

meditation-word and gathers into stillness. When it enters calm, even the meditation-word itself ceases to be an issue. This is one step towards self-reliance for the meditation-word can be released at this stage, as the heart is well settled in calm. This is a foundation and refuge for the heart that can be clearly seen. Even with just this much, there's calm and ease in the heart that used to be restless and distracted, unable to find any peace. This is because the heart normally does not know peace but only trouble and unrest, hunger and thirst, worries and concerns over affairs that are of no use to it at all. For the most part these affairs are the heart's own thoughts and imaginings, which poison and burn oneself — without anyone else being involved.

The Lord Buddha discovered the correct way to practice and achieved results to his heart's contentment. He was therefore able to explain about the causes, or the way to practice, together with their fulfillment and fruits. He taught us that the way to depend on oneself is through meditation and that this is the direct route to a firmly established self-reliance. Basing the heart in calm, to whatever degree, brings increasingly self-assurance and confidence — without having to ask anyone else about it. You will know from within yourself. This is termed *paccata.m* or *sandi.t.thiko*. The knowledge of good or bad, what needs remedying, removing or developing, will then arise in the heart. This will be understood by oneself and for oneself, as the heart is more and more firmly established.

The level of concentration, once reached, is already sufficient to form a foundation for the heart, a home where the heart can find shelter and peace. At the moment when we think so much that we feel faint-hearted and weary, we should turn inwards and meditate. The heart can then rest and be stilled from all its preoccupations, finding peace and calm. This is called going inward for refuge, to find a resting place of comfort and ease. This is one level of refuge for the heart.

The next steps, even though they're still concerned with samadhi, are proceeding into more subtle and refined aspects of the heart. The levels of *momentary concentration*, *access concentration* and *attainment concentration*<sup>5</sup> show the refining of samadhi. This culminates in *attainment concentration*, and beyond that samadhi can't advance.

Once the heart has some degree of calm, according to the level of samadhi achieved, it is stilled and refined. However, without developing mindfulness and wisdom<sup>6</sup> it will just remain at that level, lacking wisdom radically to uproot its defilements.<sup>7</sup> If we compare the defilements to a tree, although we may have pruned the branches the main trunk remains uncut and is still capable of sending out new branches.

This is why we're taught to investigate by way of wisdom. Wisdom is a keen intelligence and ingenuity. It is able to investigate and follow through without any limitation. The Lord Buddha described *wisdom-and-knowledge* — being even more refined than wisdom — in the *Discourse of Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion*. Listen to this:

*"Nyaa.na.m udapaadi, panyaa udapaadi, vijjaa udapaadi, aaloko udapaadi."*

"Knowledge arose, wisdom arose, higher-knowledge arose, light arose."

*Knowledge* or *vijjaa* refers basically to the *Threefold Knowledge*.<sup>8</sup> *Wisdom arose*, and, with greater refinement, *higher-knowledge arose* — arising right from this same heart. Wisdom is that which removes the defilements covering the heart, whereas samadhi is simply that which herds the defilements together in quietness within the heart. It is not yet capable of cutting off any defilements. The heart's attachment, which embroils it with various things, remains intact though it's weakening. Once the heart gains some calm and peace, wisdom can come into its own as the important weapon that strikes down and uproots all the different defilements in the heart, step by step.

*"Samaadhi-paribhaavita panyaa mahapphalaa hoti mahaanisa.msaa."*

There! "Wisdom once supported and nurtured in samadhi, is of great fruit and great advantage." Its examination becomes skilled, its scrutiny agile and bold, so that it is able to cut away the defilements one after another.

*"Panyaa-paribhaavita.m citta.m sammadeva aasavehi vimuccati."*

"The heart nurtured with wisdom gains proper release from the cankers."

Listen to that! It's wisdom alone that can uproot the defilements; it doesn't matter whether they are gross, intermediate or subtle, no defilement lies beyond the scope of wisdom. This is a primary principle that secures the quality and value of our practice, which is the total elimination of the defilements from the heart. It's the same practice which the Lord Buddha and his Noble Disciples have already completed before us.

Thus samadhi and wisdom can't be separated from each other. Whatever our character and tendencies might be, samadhi is always needed as a quiet resting place for the heart. The heart rests from work, by stilling in samadhi its thoughts and preoccupations. Even work in the world requires a period of rest and recuperation — making do without is just not possible. This may certainly use up working-time but, just as eating uses up food and the money needed to buy that food, it is necessary that the body has renewed vigour to continue its work. Resting and sleeping may waste some time but, again, they give the constitution new strength to fulfill its duties and tasks. Otherwise it won't be able to go on.

This use of time and material to provide for and restrengthen the body is certainly not wasted. Rather, they act like fuel for a car, which won't go anywhere without it. Samadhi and wisdom have the same sort of relationship. The mind needs time to be still and calm in samadhi, and, after it has rested, it can then continue its investigation using mindfulness and wisdom in line with its abilities.

This word *wisdom* describes something very subtle and broad ranging, to accord with the character and tendencies of the person bringing it into use. Any approach we use to investigate for the sake of uprooting the defilements is termed *right wisdom*.

It's not necessary always to have to go and read the scriptures in order to know how to deal with the defilements; and in order for it to be 'Dhamma'. These texts were extracted from the heart that is Dhamma, which had actually performed the uprooting of the defilements and clearly seen the fruits. Only then was it written down in the scriptures. So it's not the case that the texts originated before the Truth — which is the actual practice.

The Lord Buddha was the *first* to practice and so no scriptures had been made for him to use. When he taught his disciples the Noble Truths, he didn't write them down in palm leaf texts. He taught them by word of mouth, and then his disciples themselves carried on the Teaching through word of mouth. Where did they get their teachings? — From the reality in their hearts, which they had seen clearly as a result of their own practice.

It is for this reason that the techniques and strategies of mindfulness and wisdom depend primarily on the individual. Each of us needs to think, examine, investigate and work out strategies using our own intelligence and abilities, according to each case. Therefore, there's no need always to go back to retrieve scriptural authority with questions like: "*I've thought this up myself so it can't possibly deal with the defilements.*" This way of thinking is not in accord with the principles of Dhamma and can't be called *right wisdom*. When those things we remember from the scriptures can't be actualized in ridding our heart of any defilements then this too, for us, isn't *right wisdom*. It may be right wisdom in the scriptures but it's wrong in the way it's used.

The Dhamma is only explained to a limited extent in the scriptures. It's not really all that much. If we compare it to a medicine, it's a general nonspecific remedy rather than one aimed at a particular illness. Our integrating and formulating a specific approach capable of dealing with each particular defilement is termed *medicine*. It is a remedy aimed at steadily uprooting a certain defilement. This is why those who are successfully practicing in the way of wisdom have Dhamma, have mindfulness and wisdom with them wherever they are.

Ven. Acharn Mun once said that he "*listened to Dhamma day and night*". Just think of that! Things keep making contact with our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch at all times. If the knowledge of this contact doesn't arise at the heart, which is waiting with acknowledgment, where else is it going to occur? What is it that acknowledges? The heart's acknowledging also stirs up mindfulness and wisdom, which must come in to examine the ongoing involvement with a well-founded scrutiny, that accords with cause and effect. It checks out the contact and when it knows, it is able progressively to withdraw or let go. This is what is called, 'listening to Dhamma day and night', listening to Dhamma in the primal principles of nature. Defilements are natural principles together with the heart. Dhamma, with its virtue, samadhi and wisdom are natural principles within the heart. It all depends on how we bring them out to use in our investigating; utilizing them to full advantage according to the ability of mindfulness and wisdom, which is the ideal instrument to use.

The body. Listen! Elements, aggregates, body. The Lord Buddha had them and all his disciples have had them. At one stage they seized hold and attached to those aggregates, just as we do now. Such defilements were the same for them as they are now for us. But by grasping and attaching to, we establish conditions and causes for the accumulation of defilement in our hearts.

The Lord Buddha and his *arahant* disciples formerly had defilements — just like us now — so why was it possible for them to uproot them? The body is the same, the five aggregates are the same, yet they could release their attachment whereas we can't. Why? We don't seem able to understand, yet how was it that they were able to gain realization? Why can't we also comprehend? The heart is present, and mindfulness and wisdom can be built up in each aspect, according to whatever angle we wish to take up for examination.

This body, which exists right with us here now, is something that can be known and understood. When we say that the heart can't depend on itself, what it all comes down to is that it needs to depend on the body. Moreover, it not only relies on the aggregates but also holds to them as being *self*. There! We depend on them and unashamedly uphold them as *self*. What about that then? Even with some measure of shame, they inevitably must be held onto because comprehension is still lacking, and without it any possibility of letting-go. So, it is quite correct to say that we've been shameless and we need to admit to our stupidity. From here, we must endeavor to develop some cleverness that will see these things and let go of them through the strength of our own efforts.

So, for once, let's get down to the facts. These things follow the principles of nature and remain as *they are they*, whereas we exert ourselves to pull them in as *our-self*. Now *that is* going to make problems because it goes against the truth of things. To be in line with the facts you have to investigate to see according to the truth about them. Repeatedly examine and keep on investigating until you can understand. Once you understand, you won't have to order the mind to let go. It will let go on its own because these things are poisonous and harmful to us,

owing to our own attachment. There are certainly no benefits in this attachment. If there were any merit or advantage, the Lord Buddha would have told us to grasp hold — but then, such advice would not be needed as the heart would have already involved itself. It is that attachment that is the truly poisonous and harmful thing.

Even though those things may be dangerous to us, we still seize and bring them close in. We hold them by making the assumptions that, *I'm like this, I'm like that; they are me; they are mine*. The trouble arises right there with these assumptions and notions based in delusion.

None of these aggregates have any meaningfulness in themselves. They exist, in truth, in the same way as trees and mountains and such like. We are conscious of their various aspects and this makes it the affair and concern of the heart. Once dead we can't be aware of them, which shows that it's all mixed up with the heart. If we are here, there is no happiness; if we go, there's no contentment; if we grasp hold, there's no peace. And this goes on and on and on. How exasperating and vexing this can be.

This heart is totally filled with delusion. Whatever aspect it exposes, there is nothing but delusion and harmful attachments. We murmur that, *'the heart can't depend on itself'* and so has to go and hang onto this thing or that. Our investigation through wisdom is carried forth so that we can understand this whole situation. Then we can push away, press on out, disentangle and steadily attain to self-reliance.

We give other things a complete looking over and can manage to understand them. We look at building, homes, women, men, animals and material things. We can tell whether they're good or bad, valuable or not, worth keeping or not — yet why can't we realize this about our body? Not only do we fail to understand, but we also love and grasp hold of it in attachment. We wouldn't dare love or hold on to outside things in the same way, especially if we know there's nothing good in them. We wouldn't have anything to do with them. Yet here, we will take it all — the good with the bad. What can one say? This is where we really show our stupidity. These eyes in our head see what the body is like, our heart knows, but it's all on the superficial level of commonplace people. It therefore keeps on going, in a stubborn, unrelenting way without true knowledge, following the commonplace, mundane understanding. This is really the commonplace way of ignorance, the ordinary type of delusion in the circle of knowledge. It's out of line with the truth, which is why we must find a way to introduce truth into the heart; for this is wisdom. Once wisdom is there, we will realize the truth — no longer concealed — about ourselves incorporated in this physical body.

Inspect it carefully. This body is not all that big: a fathom long, a cubit wide and just a hand's span thick. We ought to be able to look it all over — externally it should only take a moment. On the inside, look deeply with a heartfelt examination, following its present state and conditions to its final dissolution. It doesn't really go anywhere; it does nothing but advance towards its disintegration and a return to its original elements. And that's all. Using wisdom make a deep-reaching and heartfelt investigation of this truth. When the truth goes *straight to the heart* in a way beyond dispute, the grasping and attachment will immediately withdraw. If the truth hasn't yet penetrated, then investigate with wisdom until it does.

This wisdom doesn't appear from anyone else. This profound insight into the body — which is right with us here — is something that arises from your own investigation, your own understanding. When that understanding is complete, you'll completely let go. You're the one who's been holding on, and no one else can let go for you so investigate and free yourself.

Just look on the body as something to lean upon and abide with. If, through your stupidity and lack of wisdom, you see it as your-self or as belonging to you, it will cause you endless suffering. This is especially so at the final breakup of the aggregates. Your worries and regrets, loves and attachments, will all go out of control. Even more than *'a kite with broken string on high'*, you'll spin along with the wind. No one will know where you'll come down, and all this in spite of the fact that the body is not worth such affection and regret. It is wholly made up of things destined for dissolution.

Are you going to persist in resisting the truth? When the time comes, there's no denying that the aggregates must break apart. This is the truth. Are you going to set yourself against it by still loving and cherishing, not wanting them to fail and fall apart? In this opposition to the truth you will only heap up suffering for yourself, until finally there will be no way out. Unless of course, you take this present moment quickly to dispatch it through wisdom. If you succeed in this then you will receive that *great gain* — the supreme happiness of Nibbaana: *"Nibbaana.m parama.m sukha.m!"*. However, if you should go against Dhamma, then it's also quite possible that at that moment you'll lose your faculties and wits.

Wisdom is a state of the art weapon system that should penetrate through your investigation to the truth. Release and let go [all attachments] in accordance with the truth, both now while you're still living here and at the time of disintegration. Wisdom will then have clearly appraised the present situation and the future — nothing can now pose a problem.

Pleasures and pains are still present because the aggregates are still functioning. These things arise in dependence on one another. And it's the heart that acknowledges and takes responsibility. It *knows* but doesn't grasp. You should understand that there are two possible ways in which it can *know* — either *knowing-in-line-with-the-truth* or by *knowing-and-seizing-hold*.

Feelings<sup>9</sup> of whatever type or level are present with the aggregates but not in the purified heart. The *arahant* does not have to bear with the feelings of both aggregate and heart, whereas 'us lot' take up the contract to build the *cycle-of-rebirth*.<sup>10</sup> When this condition of various aggregates tilts and skews, we follow; and when it topples and falls we're knocked sprawling with it. It's because of the reliance we put on them. They lead us to tilt and we tilt, to fall over and we fall too. When they lead us to stand in place, we might be able also to hold up to a certain extent but they aren't willing to stand still. Even if they persist and haven't yet reached death, we are more upset about dying than they are.

It's therefore necessary for us to investigate, clearly to see with wisdom, that these things are solely something to abide with. Days... minutes... time steadily consumes everything. If we see the way time and nature eat away, gnaw away at these things, we'll see that it's like a dog gnawing away on a meaty bone. There's no difference at all. It keeps gnawing away, biting and tearing until there's nothing left to get its teeth into. So, there is the eating away [of the aggregates] in just the same way. They keep disintegrating bit by bit, until they reach their final truth.

Whether we're sitting, standing, walking, lying down or sleeping soundly, time keeps on eating away, gnawing away. Disintegration, diminishing and decline. The continual gnawing and consuming. So you think that you can oppose and stop this? No, there's no halting this. It is the [inevitable] course of nature — something of massive proportions. Our assumptions are wrong, and what's wrong is no match for what's right and true. Disintegration is quite the correct course; it is following their principle of nature. To resist their essential nature is the heart's error that must end in suffering.

Start right now with an all-round investigation of these things. When the time comes finally to go, there will then be no trembling because your investigation and understanding are complete and you'll know that this is the inevitable way of things. There's just no alternative.

So then, let each thing go its own separate way. Whatever happens, let it occur without trying to resist the truth. Painful feelings burn away at the body and it gradually becomes brittle and 'overdone'. It steadily declines until it breaks apart and disintegrates. However, a heart circled with mindfulness and wisdom won't be broken, won't be extinguished and won't 'hang on'. It is its own self by itself, self-reliant, without needing to depend on anything — and infinitely at ease.

Right here is where we see the importance of investigation, its value for the heart. This is why sages, beginning with the Lord Buddha, teach mindfulness and wisdom as their major point — so that we can take the mind, drag the mind, out of the bonfire and release it from danger.

The Teachings of every Buddha are taught in the same way. This is because the natural principles are the same, and the defilements are always the same. No Buddha will teach differently or diverge from this. The practice is always to remove the defilements — whether great or small — from the heart. This follows from the basic principles of Dhamma, which they all teach. If we deviate from these principles, we'll be the laughing stock of the defilements.

Therefore investigate. No matter how broadly or how narrowly — take the whole universe and worldly elements. Is there anything there on which the heart can depend and which offers refuge? Take note of this term '*refuge*'. Even those things that are intimately associated with ourself are not safe. Farther out than the body, there's no hope of finding refuge in anything.

Even those things closely connected with us aren't trustworthy. If we can't discern the threat they pose, then where else will we be able to see it? It's here where the danger must be seen and the heart withdrawn from its peril. The quality that then arises in full measure is called:

*'Atta hi attano naatho': 'self is the protector of self.'*

It doesn't depend on anything. '*Virtue*', '*samadhi*' or '*wisdom*' in the final stage of release, are also terms no longer needed. Why should a refuge be found in tools and instruments that have successfully done their job of clearing out the defilements. The tools are laid down in accordance with their condition. A knife taken up to chop vegetables or to peel fruit is put aside when we take the food and eat it. It's obvious that we don't eat the knife as well.

Virtue, samadhi and wisdom are tools for dealing with the defilements. When the defilements are eliminated, all the problems for the heart also go. While life remains these tools can be utilized for the sake of the world, in line with conventional notions. However, they won't be needed to correct the defilements ever again. In particular, at the final time when the passage from the elements and aggregates will take place, there's definitely no need for anything. Mindfulness and wisdom are no longer an issue and the body poses no problem, because all problems in the heart are already finished with. Nothing can possibly cause concern. So you should move forward to this ending of problems, for this is where all your worries will cease.

If you still have problems — then that is a problem. We hear of problems concerning suffering and hardship, concerning birth, aging, sickness and death. They follow on from what we call 'problems'.



With the ending of problems all issues cease. Investigate and understand. All the things I've mentioned here lie in your own body or heart. Analyze them through the power of your mindfulness and wisdom. Examine day after day. Don't be complacent. It's not that mindfulness and wisdom are something that can be brought in to cook and eat, but they can be brought in to deal with the defilements. By utilizing them in this way the removal can carry on all day long. However, complacency will only lead you to sink — and there's certainly nothing to be gained by that. The final result will be that when you're stuck in a corner, you won't even know where your wisdom has disappeared to. You'll end up banging your head against the walls. That certainly won't do!

We're not disciples of a *Tathaagata*, the Lord Buddha, who banged his head against the wall. The Lord Buddha didn't do it, neither did the Noble Disciples whom we revere with, "*Sangha.m sara.na.m gacchaami*". How can we go and bang our heads in this way? You must endeavor, using whatever means and strategies, to find the way that leads out. Try to the best of your ability. Reaching the [present] limit of our capability, then that's all we can manage. Whatever state or level we reach, we accept it — because that's as much as we can do. But as long as it's not beyond our ability we can strive to go further, struggling, crawling and forcing our way through.

Sinking into the cycle of birth and death is similar to when a ship capsizes and everything on board goes down. The ship, the goods and cargo all sink together and the people die. We go down with the elements and aggregates through delusion and ignorance. The body goes down in accordance with its nature, but our heart sinks because of its own stupidity. Do you approve of that? There's nothing good about this fall. The heart goes straight down into the deep under the compulsion of delusion; and that surely isn't good. In fact, it's disastrously bad and unwished for. It's for this reason that we have to make sure that we steadily look for a way out.

Investigate to see the truth, and especially the truth of the painful and unpleasant feelings of the body and heart. This is of great importance. The heart goes in and seizes hold so much that it becomes a mental disease on top of everything else. Realize that the five conditions are not '*me*': Body, feelings, memory or perception, mental formations, and consciousness are particular conditions interdependent within the elements and aggregates. The heart is something apart. By successfully analysing and dissecting, using your mindfulness and wisdom, you'll reach safety from all danger.

Death — just let it go along its way. All the things of this world die, they have death built-in. How can you expect them to be constant and enduring — when the time comes for them to die, they have to die. Nothing can constrain or contradict this. Even *arahants* have to die; for them however, there is the difference that they pass away without concern and worry. As for us, we're worried even before we come to die — perturbed and possessive. On death, the worry and possessiveness intensify so that they pile up into a threat bigger than a mountain. Be careful not to let that happen to you. Make sure you get beyond such anxieties.

As I'm always saying, prepare and establish yourself with sufficient qualities — '*kusalaa dhammaa*'<sup>11</sup> (meaning) 'enough skill and intelligence'. This is our '*kusalaa*'.

"*Kusalaa dhammaa akusalaa dhammaa... "*

Wherever there's *akusalaa* — unskillfulness or stupidity — drive it out with *kusalaa* skillfulness, which is your own mindfulness and wisdom.

This is what is called 'chanting *kusalaa* for oneself', and it's something you have to do for yourself. Depending on others to track down monks to chant... "*kusalaa dhammaa*"... after your death causes so much fuss and bother. Something we don't want.

"*Kusalaa dhammaa*:" prepare yourself enough skillfulness, complete and all encompassing, and there will be no need for anything else. You'll die without turmoil and confusion like a '*sugato*'.

So then, that's all for now.

## Notes

**1.** *arom* (Thai). See Glossary.

**2.** "*Atta hi attano natho, kohi natho paro siya?*" (Dhp. verse 160)

"Self is the protector of self, for who else could (one's) protector be?"

**3.** precepts. See Glossary and Appendix.

**4.** *pari-kamma*.

**5.** *samadhi*: *khanika samadhi*; *upacara samadhi*; *appana samadhi*. See Glossary.

**6.** *sati-panyaa*.

**7.** *kilesa*.

**8.** Remembrance of past lives, knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings, and knowledge of the extinction

of all the cankers.

[9. vedanaa.](#)

[10. va.t.ta cakka.](#)

[11.](#) The prescribed chant at any Thai cremation ceremony.

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## 2. The Undying □

Listening here to this Dhamma talk please make sure that you don't allow the mind to wander away. Keep it within yourself rather than sending it out following after various moods and imaginings. Don't look back and pine after past thoughts and conceptions, for here and now they can't bring any benefit. At this time you should be trying to suffuse the heart with Dhamma, for it has become parched through its long deficiency.

It's similar to a drought-ridden jungle lacking in moisture, where the dried out vegetation easily ignites. Both living and dead trees are then scorched and consumed. Forest fires during the rainy season are rare but the hot season, when the vegetation dries out, brings a danger of fire. This may happen even in a forest monastery when it is very dry. *Bahn Tahd* forest monastery has in fact caught on fire several times. This is due to its becoming dry and parched.

When the heart becomes parched through lack of Dhamma to cool and nourish it, the fire of the defilements can rapidly take hold. This will then scorch everything coming into experience. Fire brings damage, so when the defilements blaze within the heart how can the heart itself escape harm? Regardless of its value it will become tarnished and eventually worthless. Such is the way of the heart that has been constantly scorched and consumed by fire.

A fire will damage our possessions depending on its intensity and extent. Unless, of course, they happen to be stored in a *safe-place* like a security vault, which banks use to protect their valuables. But do we have a safety vault or safe place within our hearts? Or are we continually exposing ourselves to danger, always leaving ourselves vulnerable without any concern for our deserving heart? We can use this approach when considering our situation and learning a lesson.

The heart cannot find any happiness because it's constantly being burnt. This fire is the blaze of greed, hatred and delusion that is described in the *Fire Sermon*.<sup>1</sup> There's nothing doubtful or uncertain about this. It's a timeless truth. We need to take these Dhamma questions onto a personal level, carefully comparing and considering the correctness and truth of them there, and then we'll at least be in a position to escape the heat. We will have found a breathing space, a safe, cool place and will no longer be always caught up in the conflagration.

Each of you has made the effort to come here to practice. You may consider it as a *search for a safe-place for your riches* — which are the virtue and skillfulness<sup>2</sup> you have gathered, and their protection from the devastation of the three great fires.

Fighting ordinary outside fires is difficult enough; especially when the blaze has taken such a hold that even water can't contain it. The (village) hoses always seem to clog up, and if that can't be fixed then the house will soon be charred remains and ashes. Turning to extinguish the inner blaze, however, relies on the assiduous cultivation of virtue. The meditation on *loving kindness*<sup>3</sup> for instance. The heart is then calmed and concentrated, cooled and strengthened so that it can quench the harmful fires within.

*Fire*, almost by definition, must be hot. Even sparks burn and sting if we're in their way when they fly up. So if we go along allowing ourselves to be burnt, day after day after day — what's going to be left? The heart will be burnt out. The body may remain but the heart will survive with a poor and *indifferent sort of knowing*, without wholesome aspect because it's totally given over to the all-consuming defilements. It is a knowingness invested with suffering, not with comfort and ease. It lacks lucidity and wisdom and is completely overwhelmed in suffering. So much so that the heart seems worthless. It will need a sustained effort in cultivating meditation to extinguish the fire within the heart. This will steadily bring peace and happiness.

All the teachings of the Lord Buddha are within our reach and range. He never offered impossibilities or taught blindly and haphazardly. Those of us who practice should see these Dhamma teachings as being of vital importance and take them deeply to heart. Just as we all shy away from pain and suffering — which nobody wants — so we must incline towards the remedy and antidote. And that is Dhamma.

On analysing the situation we will find that in doing the practice, the question of easiness or difficulty doesn't appear so important. We have already carefully reasoned it out and are satisfied and convinced of its effectiveness. It's this that has obliged us to take up the practice.

We can only do our best. For who isn't lazy when the defilements rule the roost? This laziness, which loathes acting towards anything good or beneficial, is with us all. It always likes to hold the lead but is certainly not

going to deliver us from suffering. We remain complacent and negligent, steadily being dragged down through the deceit and coercion of the defilements. The Lord Buddha himself also went through and then overcame these oppressions of the heart. This is something we should use as a reflection on our own situation. Then, when laziness and discouragement overwhelm us, we can encourage and arouse ourselves with his ideal example. A way will appear of resistance and commitment without always having to yield and submit. It's difficult, yes, but just carry on and do it.

The way to overcome and transcend suffering takes on a crucial importance if we acknowledge the truth of suffering. Otherwise, this predicament that we detest and dread will always confront us. But merely intellectualizing about ways of escape, without actually taking remedial action, isn't going to get us anywhere. It doesn't matter whether a technique is easy or difficult, as long as it's effective in ridding the heart of its torments it must be applied.

We are all fellows and equal in suffering, in birth and death amid the various realms of existence. Even after so long, we are still *equal first*, with no one coming in behind. Each of us has gone through repeated birth and death, matching each other in the suffering involved. There can be no competition or rivalry here for we all manage an *equal first* and are all in the same boat. Instead of achieving our top marks with the heart and Dhamma, they come from being foremost together in suffering; following the guidance and direction of the defilements. Without going against that lead there will never be an end to suffering.

Dhamma is concerned with resisting the influence of the defilements. It uses careful analysis and reason, perceiving that the source of suffering and danger must be remedied in such and such a way. The putting-to-right may be difficult or easy, but that is beside the point. When the craftsman works, he selects the appropriate tool for the job in hand. As he selects his tool he isn't concerned with its weight but only with steadily accomplishing his task.

The tools selected to be used against the defilements and for establishing the heart in genuine wholeness and integrity come from the Dhamma. These Dhamma tools are varied and need to be chosen to fit the circumstances. If the heart is only mildly disturbed by the defilements, we may apply a lighter control. The level of mindfulness and wisdom, the strength of application, the length of our sitting or walking (in meditation) or investigating, isn't yet of great significance because the work isn't at the critical stage. However, when the defilements rise up to disturb and obsess the heart, and it finds it can't unburden or release itself, we can no longer remain idle and indifferent.

Now is the time for action. Whatever is available is thrown in with a do-or-die attitude and without thought of surrender or defeat; unless death does indeed come for it's then beyond us. Our response must be to mobilize all our resources and willingly endure the painful predicament. Our resistance might bring with it suffering but that's nothing compared with the aberrant effects of defilement-born suffering. It's this that sinks one so thoroughly that there's no telling when one might emerge.

We all know about the discomfort and pain of sitting or walking in meditation for long periods. We've experienced the difficulties involved in finding strategies and skillful means to oppose the defilements. We know this much. But when the fruits of our exertion arise it will be experienced as something truly remarkable. The happiness and wonder that arises! The new insight with such ingenuity and resourcefulness. This is exactly what we have been hoping for.

Once the results arrive to join up with the cause we'll be able to cope with any obstacle or difficulty that may arise. If there were only hardship and struggle without the final rewarding peace and contentment, then no one in this world would be able to continue. I don't mean just us ordinary people, but even the Lord Buddha couldn't have awakened, nor his enlightened disciples — whom we celebrate with:

*"Buddha.m, Dhamma.m, Sangha.m sarana.m gacchaami."*

"I go for refuge to the Lord Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha."

The right time and opportunity will always eventually arrive and we will then be able to manage the task. Perseverance is therefore crucial, as is a steady and systematic use of clear reasoning; but should this weaken the defilements will immediately grow more threatening and incisive. With strong effort, with mindfulness and wisdom sharp and keen, the defilements will gradually fall away. Defilements only fear Dhamma, for nothing else can contain and subdue them. Dhamma is *faith, diligent effort, mindfulness, samadhi* and *wisdom*.<sup>4</sup>

*Faith* is trust in the fruits of the Lord Buddha's Realization. That the Dhamma he offered to the world definitely leads out from suffering — it is the *Niyyaanika Dhamma*. That if we too practice following the Lord's teaching, we will steadily and surely come to those same fruits.

*Diligent effort* will always bring the right and proper result to any action. Whether the task be internal or external it will be well accomplished when supported by diligent effort. This will be evident in its outstanding and appropriate result.

*Mindfulness* is the vital factor that oversees each task, preventing any negligence or error.

*Samadhi* is the firm, undistracted commitment to the task in hand right up to its final completion. That is the *causal aspect* while the *samadhi of result* appears in the established, concentrated mind. The heart of peace and contentment. The *samadhi of cause* concentrates on the action without vacillation or bias and the resulting *samadhi* state is that of tranquillity. This leads up to *ekaggataa*, which the Lord Buddha described as '*the mind having only one object*', without depending on anything else.

*Wisdom* is penetrative discernment, which is necessary in checking out each situation: will it be damaging or fulfilling and effective? We must rely on wisdom to investigate and analyze.

These are the factors of Dhamma that will steadily lead us out from suffering, accomplishing the work we set out to do. The Lord Buddha also described the *Four Ways to Success*<sup>5</sup> as being of equal importance. They are:

*Satisfaction*<sup>6</sup> What is it that brings satisfaction to us? If we are content with defilements then that is what will spring up. Whatever gratified us becomes the object of our search. We want *that* and so *that* is what arises. However, the *Four Ways to Success* are not concerned with such low gratifications but are directed at fulfilling our high and virtuous aspirations. They are the four means to achieve those aims that lie within the reach of us human beings.

Together with *satisfaction* there is *diligent effort*<sup>7</sup>, *attentiveness and application*<sup>8</sup> to the work, and *all-around wisdom*<sup>9</sup>. These combine to form a single effective force in accomplishing the single objective.

This is the Dhamma that builds the complete and whole human being. The heart becomes firmly based. Efforts to accomplish the work are consolidated with excellent principles, methods and suitable customs and traditions. All of this ensures that those who take up the practice do not go counter to the basic principles of Dhamma. Once the heart is attuned to Dhamma in this way it is safeguarded with the *Dhamma-protection* and will steadily prosper. Harmful factors will fade, because regardless of how long the heart had fallen into misery it was not ruined without any hope of renewal. For once the heart is purged through exertion it will be left bright, serene and happy. This then is the key, the vital instrument in turning our aspiration into full reality. A mere passive *wishing* or easy discouragement will abort such accomplishments.

Whatever you are doing or thinking, never forget our great Teacher, the Lord Buddha. When discouragement presses down, recollect his example. His persistent exertion and his Awakening through using these Dhamma factors of *faith, effort, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom*. This is how he attained to Awakening.

What direction should one take to develop and nourish peace of mind? So that, at the very least, you can claim to be following the way, with a guide and teacher? The Lord Buddha explained his own fruitful practice in an orderly and methodical way, so there's really no alternative way to try.

*"Dhamma.m sarana.m gacchaami: I go to refuge in Dhamma"*

— this phrase finds its source in the five factors of *faith, diligent effort, mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom*. It's these five factors that arose with the Lord Buddha himself.

*"Sangha.m sarana.m gacchaami"* — going for refuge to the Sangha is just the same. None of the noble disciples, regardless of their (former) wealth or class, were weak-willed or easily discouraged. Once gone forth into Dhamma's Way they were characterized by their energy and diligent effort. This aspect of exertion is a vital factor in steadily uplifting the quality of one's heart. These *five factors* and *four ways* go together to raise the heart, releasing it from the oppressed condition of worldlings sunk in suffering.

Some of the disciples walked on their meditation path until their feet blistered. How's that for striving! Some didn't lie down for three months at a time. The Ven. Cakkhupala strove like that until his eyes ruptured and were broken and blinded. Is that enduring in one's endeavor or not?

As for us, there's no need to ruin our body but it would be good if we could at least make the defilements suffer a bit; so that they run away and hide. Don't let them swarm all over the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Once infested with defilements you'll never be able to find Dhamma or anything essential within the heart. How on earth are you going to find any peace?

We must rely on these Dhamma factors to overcome those defilements that remain dominant in the heart. These principles of Dhamma must be taken deeply to heart — don't cherish anything else. They are the tools that will steadily deliver the heart to the perfect freedom that we all prize so highly. Your choice is between the heart of freedom and the heart under the domination of the defilements. So which is better, the slave totally deprived of liberty or the free person?

We have long been passively submissive under the mass of defilements and craving. It's only when we become weary of their domination and start to recognize their curse, that we'll be able to resist, by whatever way we can. Ultimately, we'll have to rely on these five essential Dhamma tools to finish off and eliminate the defilements.

Where is the arena and battleground for anyone going into Dhamma practice? What do those who relentlessly walk their meditation path or sit cross-legged day and night take as their battlefield and zone of investigation? The Lord Buddha brought forward the *Four Noble Truths* from the principles of Dhamma. These Four Noble

Truths are there within the body and mind of human beings. You are human, so when you walk or sit in meditation searching for truth and Dhamma, it's obvious that you must look for the Noble Truths.

We are aware of the suffering that arises in the body and mind of human beings and animals. We, unlike the animals, know a way to remedy the situation. How can this suffering be so welcome and desirable? When it appears in the body it's plainly unwished for, yet even with bodily ease and comfort any suffering that comes up will bring anxiety and negative, unsightly behavior. And increasing distress manifests in an even more unattractive way.

The tormented heart will always expose itself in detrimental ways, for instead of alleviating and ridding itself of suffering it actually makes the situation worse. The idea that one can be rid of suffering — 'get it off one's chest' — with harsh words and offensiveness is completely mistaken. In reality, the perpetrator not only hurts others with outpourings from a soiled heart but also increases his own suffering. He spreads and multiplies his troubles rather than throwing them out.

One element of the Noble Truths concerns the searching into how suffering actually arises. We may be aware of suffering but to do anything about it we need to know its root-cause. This is the originator, the producer of suffering or *samudaya*. The Lord Buddha usually explained this as, *sensual craving, craving for existence and craving for no-existence*.<sup>10</sup>

Desire for things that *I love* and aversion for what *I dislike* is the source of our suffering. Those thought fabrications based in defilements are producing suffering and so can be classed as a source. All these branches and ramifications spring from one main trunk — and that's in the heart. The heart is embedded with the roots of greed, hatred and delusion.

Examine your body and then turn your inspection inward to the heart. Check on its ongoing thoughts and fabrications. What do you find? The endless proliferating of thoughts that contrive and process suffering for both yourself and others. The Lord Buddha taught about the application of mindfulness and wisdom to inspect what's going on. The heart appears anxious and concerned for these aggregates. But what's the point in that? The aggregates have their space here so surely there's room enough in a cemetery or crematorium ahead, just as there is for everyone else in the world. What can all this concern and possessiveness achieve? Where's the advantage? Won't the result be that of '*unfulfilled desires that breed suffering*'<sup>11</sup> for the heart. The Lord Buddha therefore advised against indulging such desires and to turn and examine the actual situation.

The bodily aggregate is fashioned and put together and is thus also destined for eventual breakup. Just that. This can be irrefutably seen once wisdom is brought to bear, and then any possessiveness seems altogether pointless. We can then let go our grasp and allow the body to follow its own nature; whether it's still holding together or has entered the inevitable final phase of dissolution.

This world is full of *cemeteries* awaiting each person and animal. Examining the truth we can no longer doubt the reality of our reserved plot, or, indeed, the inevitability of our future death. Clearly acknowledging this mortality means we can then *let go of* our worries and concern. Death is a fundamental part of the law of nature that can neither be denied or defied. Let nature take its course, and the earth, water, air and fire will follow their own essential natures.

*That which knows* should genuinely know and not mistake water, fire and air as '*myself*'. This acts like a parasite hooking in and trapping the heart in turmoil. We *mis-take* them for self and thereby fall into suffering.

The aggregate of feeling is much the same. We have experienced *pleasure and pain*<sup>12</sup> from the day of our birth up to the present. Whether it was a feeling of body or heart, it's all about *impermanence, suffering and not-self*. It arises so as to pass away... When this (world of) assumptions and *suppositions*<sup>13</sup> has come forward, nothing is able to keep steady and unchanging.

Where exactly is the suffering in feeling? Bodily pains are not too difficult to examine when wisdom penetrates through. But the painful feeling in the heart — *this* is important. When there is bodily pain there is also pain and suffering in the heart that arises because of the *source*<sup>14</sup> of suffering. This is the way that the defilements trick all beings in the world with their beguilements. The deception of taking *this body as myself* must be cleared by a thorough analysis of the true nature of the body. The investigation of pleasant and unpleasant feeling is aimed at erasing from the heart the notion that *this feeling is myself*.

Let things be as they truly are: *feeling is feeling* while *this is me*, which is that *knowingness*. Don't mix them up. But anyway, that's not possible as they are intrinsically different. How can they become merged together into one? Can two individuals be combined as only one? Having to bear the burden of one person is heavy enough — but to have the extra weight of two, three, four or five others... We don't just take up the body but also shoulder the other four aggregates, which press down with the weight of attachment. It's the heart that takes responsibility and so the heart alone must bear the consequences. That is suffering — and there's no compensation to be found. And yet we still persist with such hanging on. This needs looking at to see the true nature of pain.

There is then the aggregate of perception or memory,<sup>15</sup> that remembers something only to forget it again. When

that memory is required we may recall it anew and then it will fade away again — "*sanyaa vaassa vim hati*". That's how the Lord Buddha described it and who can argue with that. Perception is impermanent, memory fades into forgetfulness — "*sanyaa anicca*". This *anicca* was explained by the Lord Buddha and it's this that we now use when we chant for the dead:

*"Anicca vata sankhaaraa — impermanent are all conditioned things."*

But no chants or spells are able to conjure up a person or a self. You won't find any sign of self in all the five aggregates, for they are *impermanent, suffering and not-self*.

Investigate and analyze through to a more refined understanding. Don't be so afraid of dying, for death like that isn't found with the heart. By bringing in such fears you'll only succeed in deceiving yourself and piling up suffering. This goes counter to Dhamma, to the truth taught by the Lord Buddha. If you accept his Way then obviously you should follow it and see the truth for yourself rather than going against it. This is the true *going for refuge*. "*Buddha.m sarana.m gacchaami*." It's a discerning of the truth of the heart rather than a mere mouthing of words. The Lord Buddha offered this Teaching to all creatures of the world, and as that includes us why shouldn't we too be able to comprehend the Four Noble Truths. They're there within each one of us.

Now, about thought-concocting formations.<sup>16</sup> Is this contriving and fabricating of thoughts trustworthy? We think up various forms from various things — for instance, take the form of a doll that is quickly broken. Our thought-fabrications are much the same. We think up good or bad (things), anything at all becomes a concoction to fool ourselves. This is why the heart is the chief of fools, gullible and easily taken in by any deception. It believes in anything and is endlessly played false.

However, when wisdom is also present it will be able to keep in check and carefully screen such fabrications. They may appear a hundred or thousand times a second, but wisdom is ready at every turn. What can fool wisdom? It realizes that formations are formations, and that *knowingness* is the heart. How can it be deceived by them? Why be startled and react to shadows arising from oneself — for this is what formations are.

It is the same with *consciousness*<sup>17</sup> that flicks on and off whenever anything contacts through the senses and is known by the heart. It is then concocted through formations and memory into self-contrived delusions. We repeatedly fall for our self-made fancies, and it's this wrong taking up of objects that creates suffering. The damage is done here and this is where it must be seen.

You will learn about the Noble Truths right at this point. Follow and probe into it with greater precision and refinement, without concern over how many times you have to go over it. The importance lies in the eventual clear penetration of wisdom, which can pierce through any attachment even if it may seem as big as a mountain.

When wisdom is in close pursuit, *craving* will have to retreat into the *big cave*,<sup>18</sup> into the heart. Driving forward with wisdom, using *impermanence, suffering and not-self* (to question and probe) exactly where the real substance of these shadows is found. Penetrating further, you will see that it only exists there in the heart where they have gathered together. Elsewhere, it's just disassociated shadows; excitement and deception over form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

Once they have all converged, the heart must turn and investigate, right there, in the heart. At this point we must be willing to follow them in and destroy them there, in their hiding place in the heart. They are like brigands in ambush, waiting to shoot our heads off. When bandits take over a place, no matter how valuable the building might be, we must go in with explosives and blow them out; destroying it all, including the bandits. If all must be obliterated — so be it. We still have life and can build again, for we managed to avoid dying too.

This is how to deal with this most subtle sort of defilement hiding out in the heart. Hit them hard with the truth of impermanence, suffering and not-self, because these defilements are the essence of *sammuti* — all our suppositions about the world. They must be crushed and dispersed from the heart, and then we'll see whether the heart has also been annihilated. No, it is not destroyed. The heart has no cemetery. It is *undying*<sup>19</sup> by its very nature — even when it still has defilements.

The Lord Buddha called this the complete dissolution of the defilements: "*the end of danger, the quenching of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion*" by the pouring of the *Undying Dhamma*<sup>20</sup> elixir. With the defilements gone, only spotless purity remains. It is here in this fully purified heart that perfect happiness is to be found. All work finishes here; all projects end here. The Lord said:

"Done is the task, fulfilled is the holy life, there is no further work to do."<sup>21</sup> All suffering ends with this right understanding.

The summit of Dhamma is found in this purified heart. The "*Buddha.m- Dhamma.m- Sangha.m sarana.m gacchaami*" that we repeat to reverently recollect the Lord Buddha, all gather and converge in this pure nature. *Buddho, Dhammo, Sangho* are exactly this pure nature. Concern with questions about the Lord Buddha's *final passing away*<sup>22</sup> in India — 'how many centuries ago is it now?' — will now end. The true nature of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha will now be evident in 'one's own' heart of purity. This is the heart's priceless treasure, where the true state of things is seen and all questions settled.

Where did the Lord Buddha go when he *finally passed away*? The bodily aggregate certainly disintegrated following its nature — bodies being the same anywhere. However, the purified nature, *Buddho*, was not destroyed or annihilated for it is not confined by time or position. It is this that we refer to in "*Buddha.m-Dhamma.m- Sangha.m sarana.m gacchaami*". When we can experience this for ourselves, we will be able to verify with complete certainty that this nature cannot be annihilated.

The *arahant* disciples understand this. Wherever they may be, they are together with Dhamma; with 'Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha', having constant audience with the Lord Buddha. Their minds are unshakable because the fires of desire are quenched with the waters of Dhamma. "*The quelling and cessation of all conditioning factors is supreme happiness.*"<sup>23</sup> These conditioning factors are really *samudaya*, the source of suffering, so when this is ended all that remains is supreme happiness.

The means and the results, the good and the bad, are within all of us who are aware and care. This *nature that knows* is uniquely suited to all levels of Dhamma, up to and including the *state of purity*<sup>24</sup> and there's nothing apart from this knowledge.

Please try steadily to purify this *nature that knows*, ridding it of all obstructions and oppressive influences. There will then be no need to make enquiries about *Nibbana*, for having experienced the purified heart all questions will be finally settled.

It's appropriate to stop this Dhamma talk here.

### Notes

1. *raaga, dosa and moha. AAdittapariyaaya Sutta*
  2. *punya* (Pali) or boon (Thai)
  3. *mettaa bhaavanaa*
  4. *saddhaa, viriya, sati, samaadhi, panyaa*
  5. *iddhi-paada*
  6. *chanda*
  7. *viriya*
  8. *citta*
  9. *viima.msaa*
  10. *kaamata.nhaa, bhavata.nhaa and vibhavata.nhaa*
  11. *yampicca.m na labhati tampi dukkha.m*
  12. *sukha-, dukkha-vedanaa*
  13. *sammata*
  14. *samudaya*
  15. *sanyaa*
  16. *sa.nkhaara*
  17. *vinyaa.na*
  18. *guuhaaseyya.m*
  19. *amata.m*
  20. *amata-dhamma*
  21. "*Vusita.m brahmacariya.m kata.m karaniiya.m naapara.m itthattaa yaati pajaanaati.*"
  22. *parinibbaana*
  23. "*Tesa.m vuupasamo sukho.*"
  24. *visuddhi dhamma*
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### 3. The Highest Blessing □

#### Nibbaana Sacchikiriya Ca

The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha was revealed correctly and properly. It was neither hidden nor obscured but was clearly presented on every level according to the truth. For example, it states that virtue and wrongdoing,<sup>1</sup> heaven and hell, *Nibbaana*, all really do exist. It continues unequivocally to maintain that the defilements are also things present and extant. These truths can't be denied. Yet why do such things pose a problem for us?

The Dhamma was openly and forthrightly presented. There was nothing esoteric and mysterious about it, for it was expounded entirely in accordance with truth — the reality that's present now. It was offered from every aspect and level of truth, and yet we still can't understand it. It's as if the Lord Buddha is saying to the blind and the deaf, "Look here! Look at this!". Apparently we must be like those blind people who can only grope around but can't actually see. Even though we know that the Lord has already explained all about it, we still always seem to bump into suffering. We've been told that suffering isn't something to welcome and yet we are constantly caught up by it. This is because our motives — the causes we put into effect — become aimed entirely at amassing the fire of suffering to heap on ourselves.

One quality of Dhamma that the Lord has pointed out is that it is *visible here and now* — *sandi.t.thiko*. Happiness and suffering can both be seen and experienced within ourselves. Death is one example of this. The other qualities of *ehipassiko* and *opanayiko* are also very important principles. *Ehipassiko* means '*calling one to come and see*' the genuine Dhamma. This though does not mean that we should go out calling *other* people to come and see it. '*Ehi*' refers to teaching the one listening to Dhamma and practicing it, so turn your heart to look inwards to where the truth is found.

Using more worldly terms, we can say that the truth is constantly proclaiming itself, constantly inviting and challenging — because of its candour and honesty it challenges us to, "*look here!*". This '*ehi!*' invites *you* to look, rather than getting other people to come and see. How can others see, when they neither know the truth nor where to look for it. The truth is in themselves but if they don't search for it there then they are certainly not going to find the truth inside us.

*Ehipassiko* — the Lord taught us to look at the truth, the truth about ourselves that is right here.

*Opanayiko* means to 'bring within'. Whatever we see or hear or touch needs leading inside so that we can make good use of it. Anything coming into contact through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, or appearing in the heart, must always be *opanayiko* — brought inward. Whether it is concerned with goodness or wickedness, happiness or suffering, the internal or external, past or future, it must all — *opanayiko* — incline towards the heart. For this is the principle source of all internal affairs.

The heart is preeminent and nothing surpasses it in importance. The issue of the heart is therefore pressing and critical: "*All dhammas originate from the heart*".<sup>2</sup> This statement alone is enough to shake up the entire physical world. One's slightest movement must originate in the mind, and in fact, all *dhammas* must look to the heart as being foremost.

Only the heart is able to know about all the various things. What are these various kinds of *dhamma*? There are *wholesome dhammas* and *unwholesome dhammas*,<sup>3</sup> These are only found in the heart. *Wholesome dhammas* come from the resourcefulness and cleverness of the heart, which enables it to respond quickly and appropriately to the ongoing situation. In fact, the various issues and consequences of these ongoing events spring from our own heart. When *unwholesome dhamma* arises in the heart, bring up the investigative wisdom of *wholesome dhamma* to examine and rectify our foolishness — which is that *unwholesome dhamma* — so that it can be disposed of.

*Opanayiko* is the *inclining, drawing inward* of any experience. Whether it be one of foolishness or cleverness, happiness or suffering, coming from anyone whatsoever, it all needs to be brought inside and made a lesson for the heart.

*Ehipassiko* is the viewing of the point source, the well- spring of all issues. And that is the heart. It's involved in never-ending activity, outperforming commonplace machinery that starts and stops according to its fixed schedule. The heart is never shut down but goes on and on until the last day of life.

It makes no difference how much we grumble and complain about the suffering involved in this state of affairs. Only by correcting it at its root cause will there be any practical value. Rectify the cause and the resultant suffering will diminish — in proportion to the proficiency of our circumspection and wise judgment. The Lord Buddha never pointed away from these principles for that would be like teaching one to catch hold of distant shadows. "*There, over there!*" — whereby one overlooks the real perpetrator, the original cause. This is of paramount importance because that's where the defilements are born.

What are we going to do? How are we going to cope? What is the origin of the suffering and the hardship that all beings must endure? What is the source of birth, aging, sickness and death? The defilements are the source and the prime-mover and yet they themselves can only arise in the heart. They are right here. That's why the



Lord didn't teach about other places. So when we get down seriously to investigate the structure, the cause and effect of all this, and gradually see the truth and steadily uproot the defilement — we must do it here. This is the spot where our ignorance and stupidity binds and confines us, allowing the defilements to accumulate and grow.

This is also the place where mindfulness and wisdom, as they increase in their range and discernment, must uproot the defilements. Mindfulness must be maintained there with care and vigilance. This place — which is the heart — needs to be closely protected and sustained; nourished with mindfulness and with meditation. Mindfulness protects the heart by not allowing it to stray outside, whereby it would involve itself in external affairs and finally return with fire.

From *protection* one moves to *eradication* by analysing and probing into the reasons for this situation. We must then try to correct whatever is detrimental by examining its fundamental nature and rectifying it at its place of origin. The essential point at issue lies with the heart. It is the heart that takes up birth and endlessly wanders through the repeated cycles of birth and death. The accumulated corpses of just one person would be enough to fill the whole world — yet ignorance so blinds the 'owner' that nothing is known about the true extent of the situation. What remains is just deception and delusion, where no essence of truth can be found.

This is where you should try to advance your mindfulness so that it can come to terms with the thoughts and imaginings bubbling up in the heart. With awareness in attendance the slightest rippling of agitation in the heart will simultaneously arouse 'mindfulness and wisdom.' As we sit and watch right at the place where all developments originate — right at the heart — we will gradually start to notice the first flurries of activity.

This is where the deception of the heart begins and the heart will need wisdom to get to the truth of it. We'll also have to investigate the nature of the body until insight is implanted in the heart, so that the truth of each bodily part is deeply felt by the heart. By repeatedly examining and going over each part the heart will understand more and more, and the initial understanding will deepen to profound conviction.

*Form.4* Listen, what is this *form*? Hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth and skin, flesh, sinews and bones: These are all *form*. This includes every internal bodily part and organ that is on the physical and material side. The Lord called this the *form aggregate* or simply, the body. All right then. Let's look at this. While exploring and probing, mindfulness will need to follow each observation of a part or organ of the body. Let mindfulness direct the work of investigation, being constantly in attendance. Let wisdom screen and process the information for a more and more subtle understanding. This is our work and task.

Our previous occupation with thinking and imagining, with drifting and wandering, always lacking in mindfulness has been of enormous harm to the heart. Whereas this other work is directly leading to the ending of the internal suffering and danger. Mindfulness holds down each piece of work, while wisdom explores, and knowledge follows through each bodily part and provides a guideline for the heart to follow. Mindfulness and wisdom must constantly follow along closely, as writing follows the ruled line. This is the '*Kammatthana Tour*', the (*in-*)*sight-seeing meditation trip* around the cemetery found within ourselves.

You must not allow wishful over-eagerness for a speedy realization to interfere with the investigation. Keep your understanding following what is currently being investigated. Continue the analysis and differentiate and penetrate into the nature of this bodily aggregate. It's covered with a mere membrane of skin — that still manages to deceive the eyes of us all. It's not even as thick as a palm-leaf manuscript. That's skin. Yet whichever way your investigations proceed they must always be aimed at the overcoming of delusion. That won't be all, for they will soon start to become a quite fascinating and absorbing exercise too.

Alright! Let's take this body and look up to the top and down to the bottom. Let's see its outside and its inside. Let's immerse ourselves in this *tour*, not merely 'going along for the ride' but with mindfulness in full attendance together with wisdom checking each experience. In this way wherever you look you'll find the true Dhamma.

This can be considered the work of purging and eliminating the poison of *attachment5* which infiltrates and infects every part of the body. It is primarily because of this attachment that suffering is spread everywhere. This 'universal suffering' refers to the suffering in the heart caused by attachment, rather than any other sort.

The bodily pain and suffering arising from illness — the aggregates must always fall under the law of impermanence, suffering and not-self — was experienced by the Lord Buddha and the *noble disciples*. But the heart that has transcended those conditions, or is in a position to do so, can observe — without negligence — these things so that it's no longer affected by them. This is because the envisioning of oneself is done so that you can investigate and get to the truth. This is the important factor in preventing anything from affecting the heart. In other words, suffering can no longer arise within, because the body is no longer imagined and credited as being '*me*' or '*mine*'.

Examine this body. Probe right into it. Alright then, what is skin really like? How about those animal hides that are made into handbags and shoes?

Let's look at the whole lot: the flesh, sinews and bone. See here! Both animal flesh and human flesh are much the same. Delve into it — what's the nature of bone? What's the difference between animal and human bone? Look to see the full truth within yourself. Carry on in! Penetrating this body that inherently poses such a

challenge to us.

So why can't we fathom it out? Why isn't the heart bold and courageous? Once we begin to see the truth, it will be enough to start challenging the deception. The truth, realized with wisdom, is potent and able gradually to wipe out those false and treacherous views until they are entirely eliminated.

The truth that appears within the heart arises through mindfulness and wisdom. This *truth* is valid in two aspects or conditions: In one respect there's the *truth* of the aggregates whose very existence offers us a challenge. And then, when wisdom has fathomed and realized the truth of those conditions, there will be the *truth* within the heart. Such is the way of uprooting the defilements. Once these two truths meet and connect they are no longer harmful and will expel all the poison and danger out from the heart.

While on the '*Kammatthana sightseeing tour*' of the body, we have examined and investigated its various organs, both large and small. Now we have to continue this *Kammatthana* trip to see how this body ends in transformation and dissolution. We must fix our attention here to see in what way it will decay and rot, until it has disintegrated and dispersed. The body must definitely go this way, though which aspects we target can be adjusted according to inclination and preference. Suppose that we wish to fix our attention on one particular object, so as to clearly see it within the heart. Whatever object we take — skin for instance — must be firmly held and targeted so that it appears as an image in the heart.

Should the image appear high or low, don't speculate about its position. The object under investigation must be taken as the target for our awareness, with mindfulness directing the way without distraction. However much the object might appear to expand, just see it as it is in the present. Whether it's high or low, let there just be awareness of that without wondering if it's *too* high or *too* low, or has already left the body.

At first we might wonder why it is that although we set our investigation inside the body, the particular part now seems to be external to it. Don't allow such thoughts to intervene. By not permitting awareness to wander from its target — whatever position it may have assumed — the object will give us a sight of 'the extraordinary and wondrous'. For example, if you concentrate on *flesh*, of whatever part of the body, see it clearly within yourself and then you'll observe that it will gradually transform itself. With mindfulness firmly established — which is when we have undivided attention firmly fixed in front of us — the heart will know that it is doing the work and that wisdom is doing the analysis. In a short while that object begins to transform itself. It starts to decay and decompose.

Right then. Let's get to see this clearly, without fear of death. Why should we be afraid when we are looking at the truth of the matter and not our own mortality? Go ahead then, let it disintegrate. I did my own investigations in this way. Each of the different bodily-parts just broke-up. It was really fascinating doing this investigation, this exploration into one's own body. Yet while being absorbed in the investigation, it then seemed as if the body had completely disappeared. Awareness of the body was not apparent even though I was investigating the body.

So. The body disintegrates. The head falls off... and an arm breaks off right there, in front of one. Then the other arm goes, and a length of bone, and everything inside ruptures and bursts out. Keep on looking. Be absorbed in watching the body as it falls apart.

Some of the bodily fluids seep out into the ground and some evaporate into the air. That's the way it goes. Once all the liquids are lost into the ground and atmosphere, the bodily parts start to dry out and steadily dehydrate until they finally crumble into dust. Then the dust from the bones of the body and the earth itself merge into one. This is seen so clearly.

Those more solid parts, like a bone for instance, could be taken up and seen as if it's burnt in a fire or as it slowly decomposes and crumbles away. Eventually they all seem to have become one with the earth.

In this particular investigation both the earth and water elements appeared the most vivid; but especially the earth element. The water element seemed to remain as water, while neither the air nor fire elements posed any problem. Unlike the courser, more solid parts, they didn't seem the weighty objects of this investigation and therefore didn't appear so vividly to the heart.

Once this stuff had completely dispersed into, and become one with, the earth, the heart was empty and bare. At that moment everything was void.

However, when *you* are doing the investigation, please don't speculate about such things. Just take the truth within yourself as your own, as your living testimony. Don't bring in outside speculation for witness and mode of practice, because that's about other people and doesn't belong to you. What you have realized by yourself is your own, and whatever that might be, let it happen within yourself. Your own realization and experience are what matters. So remember this as you go further.

At other times the results of the practice were not always exactly the same. Although they would still be following the natural course of things. On occasion the body would have dispersed into the earth, but some skeletal parts were left in a partial state of decomposition. Then a thought appeared in the heart predicting that,

'even though they haven't all gone yet, what's left is still doomed to return to the earth again'. This when there was no awareness of one's body — yet the heart was still able to create such things.

A moment later and the ground suddenly seemed to swell up out of nowhere and the rest of the remains were swallowed up. And so they all were transformed into earth. When that was done, the heart turned around to another angle and... everything disappeared. Even the ground that had so suddenly swallowed up the bone fragments was no longer there.

There was the knowledge and realization that: '*Aha! Every part of the body is made of earth and has returned to earth.*' Then the heart turned around and everything disappeared with only pure awareness remaining. An indescribable feeling of wonder and amazement arose, because my investigation had never ended like this before. But now it had actually happened and was vividly perceived and experienced. The heart was now one, without a single moment of duality, because it was steadfast and constant in a true state of oneness.

(Normally,) as soon as the heart begins to stir, it will form two with the thought process, but here, there was absolutely no thought process. All that remained was bare awareness, which was marvellous and amazing. At that moment there was no physical world — no trees, no mountains. Nothing was present. It was empty and void as if it was all space, however there was also no conjectures using such ideas. Only *knowingness* was present.

The heart was stilled like this for hours and then, having emerged from that condition, any object focused upon appeared empty and void. Such an experience probably only happens once for each practitioner. For me it happened just that one time and has never occurred again. However, the investigative process can be repeated and will eventually be successful every time, depending on the skillfulness of the heart.

The transformation process into earth, water, air and fire will then be vividly seen every time one investigates it. This repeated experience strengthens the heart, familiarizes it with the truth of the *elements* and enables it steadily to uproot the view that they are '*me*' or '*mine*'. For that's how things really are — this body is made up of elements, when one talks in terms of elements, or it's the earth element. It is not '*me*' or '*mine*' as one's various opinions and imaginings like to impute and depict.

Repeated investigations will steadily deepen your insight until you are able clearly to comprehend and detach yourself from seeing the body as '*me*' and '*mine*'. Then there will be merely *the body*, and we can also say that even that's only a label. We could also call it a *conditioned phenomenon*, if we wanted to. Once this is sufficiently understood, nothing can pose a problem any more. Whatever the heart may call it, it won't make any difficulties, because the problem has always lain solely within the heart.

Our problems have to be dealt with by disengaging from fantasy and delusion, and by entering into the *truth of Dhamma*. This is that 'bare awareness' of the 'bare elements'. We might designate *body* but that's just the *bare elements*. Turning in towards the heart is *bare awareness*. We then have the two as the *bare truth*. Alright then, if *feeling* springs up let it carry on, for it's 'elemental' or a *natural process*<sup>6</sup> similar to the body. This is how they are connected.

*Perception* or *notions*<sup>7</sup> are concerned with knowledge of the heart's engaging in thought concoctions. We know that it has gone out from the heart and is engaged in a particular thought fabrication or supposition. On becoming aware of this the heart will withdraw and perception will stop straight away. But if we are not aware it will continue on, connecting up with this... and that... in progression... like a chain... link to link. And it will only stop the moment that mindfulness catches up. For it will then cease to concoct concepts and associations of ideas. This is what is meant by *mindfulness matching up* — and if it can't catch up with the train of thoughts, they will perpetually go on and on.

Investigating the body should become one of your major concerns. The Lord Buddha therefore taught the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* that are all found within this body and mind. And this includes the Noble Truths. Yet what might be the purpose of all these investigations? They are aimed at enabling the heart to understand the truth of the situation and thereby let go of its deluded attachment. It will then come up against this *being-a-self*.

So then, when our confused misconceptions concerning the four elements and the five aggregates are resolved, we must then turn to investigate the delusion of the heart. See! There *is* a problem remaining.

This level of delusion is more insidious due to the subtle nature of its defilements. We need to move in closer to examine and then decide what to use as the basis for this investigation. We are investigating the heart and the heart is *naama-dhamma*.<sup>8</sup> So are feelings, defilements and wisdom itself, so it doesn't just apply to the heart. *Naama-dhamma's* are able to coexist and interrelate and this means that the defilements and the heart can associate together.

It's wisdom then, that must do the probing for it too is a *naama-dhamma*. We must investigate in the same way as we did with the aggregates, by differentiating and analysing so as to see through to the true nature. Then we must put the heart in the dock and hit hard at the accused, the offender.<sup>9</sup>

The heart has gathered its *offenses* into itself and is conceited, thinking itself all-wise and all-knowing. It thinks it knows everything about this physical world of sense impressions and aggregates. But it doesn't yet know about *itself*. This is where it gets stuck. This is where it is ignorant. Wisdom must now be turned loose into the heart, dissecting and cutting away so as to penetrate it. We must thrust through to that *knowingness*, which is the body of conceited awareness, which forms the real delusion of the heart.

A careful and thorough scrutiny and analysis of the condition that has infiltrated within the heart, will show that it's just another natural process.<sup>10</sup> The heart, therefore, won't come to ruin by such a rigorous investigation. Nevertheless, one's investigation can't be eased back for fear of harming it, because if the heart is able to stand up to the truth it will prevail and won't be destroyed. It will be true to its nature, and so will not only survive but will go beyond all *offenses* to purity. Let's see whether the heart will be annihilated or not.

Delve and dig into it. Don't be hesitant or over-protective of anything, not even of the heart. Don't be afraid that the heart will be destroyed or ruined. Once wisdom has completely wiped out the infiltrators, every kind of defilement will disappear. For it's this that makes up all the falsity existing within the heart. When the investigation really gets moving properly, those things that are vulnerable to dispersion will not be able to resist and will be annihilated. But the nature that can't be annihilated will come through and stand.

Please notice therefore, that it is the heart that is dominated by the defilements. And that once wisdom has totally shattered and cleared the defilements away, the heart will be transformed into the state of purity. This is the genuine purity. How can it vanish? Were it to disappear, how could it be pure? That dies, that is ruined, but *this* is the genuine deathless, the *undying*.<sup>11</sup> It is undying through purity and doesn't turn<sup>12</sup> — unlike the *immortality* that spins with the revolving wheel of birth and death. This is the vital truth present in the midst of our aggregates.

So we come to the main culprit, the one that incites and agitates the heart; pressing it into falling for the world, for the elements, for the aggregates, for pain, illness, and confusion. In truth, these things don't have anything to say about the matter. The body is how it is. Feeling arises as it should — it doesn't know that it's pain or pleasure or neutral feeling. It is this heart that goes and gives meaning to them and afterwards is duped by those self-made meanings. It gains nothing but harm and affliction for itself in the process.

We must therefore inquire into this. What can be lost by a vigorous examination into the true state of affairs? If the body should break, let it break. It comes, like all things in the world, under the law of impermanence, suffering and not-self — just as the Lord always said it did. How can we interfere? Let go of it! If it can't endure, then let it go! Everything in this physical world is breaking and dissolving. Some sooner, others later, but surely our aggregates can't last for aeons and aeons, for they too fall under the same law and limit. So let's investigate to see our aggregates according to truth, before they break up. This is encompassing, all-around wisdom, ready clearly to see painful feeling coming on the scene.

Alright then. Today we climb into the (boxing) ring. That's it. Today, we are going into the ring to see and realize the truth in accordance with Dhamma. We're certainly not going in there to fall down or collapse. When painful-feeling arises, that's pain's business, but the investigation of it belongs to mindfulness and wisdom. We are searching for the truth so how can we be knocked down. We don't do it for our downfall, but for victory and for penetrative insight. For the all-embracing realization of truth — of every aspect of truth within our heart. Victory will bring us freedom, and it's this that is *'the highest blessing'*.<sup>13</sup>

The Lord said that:

*"The realization of Nibbaana is the highest blessing."*<sup>14</sup>

So you can see that this is the way to go. Nibbaana is concealed because the heart is covered and obscured by defilements, craving and ignorance. This has to be cleared and put right by investigation and an analysis to gain insight into the truth. It is the way to uncover and reveal all the things that have been hidden. It's called the way of realizing Nibbaana and seeing it clearly within the heart — here is *the highest blessing*. What can be any higher than this?

From here on it is:

*"Whatever comes into contact, this heart is no longer shaken or upset. Nothing can reach it or affect it." Asoka viraja khema etam mangalamuttama."*<sup>15</sup>

This is the secure and blissful heart — *"khema.m"* — and it is the highest blessing. These *two blessings* that I've mentioned are found in the heart, and nowhere else. It is the heart that is the blessing, yet it can also become a bane.

Right at this moment, we are turning the malediction that has infiltrated our hearts into the benediction *'Nibbaana sacchikiriya'*. So then, let's open and clear all of this:

*"Tapo ca brahmacariyanca Ariya sacca na dassanam."*

Here, *'tapo'* means the burning up of defilements. They sear the heart with their own heat so we must turn on

them the dhamma-torch,<sup>16</sup> which is mindfulness and wisdom. It's putting the heat on the defilements and burning them out.

'*Ariya Sacca*' and '*dassanam*' is the realization of the Four Noble Truths: *Suffering* is now fully understood by the heart; its *Cause* is completely relinquished; the *Path* is fully developed to its ultimate level of greater-mindfulness and wisdom.<sup>17</sup> All that's left to say is, the *Cessation* of suffering is now fully apparent.

This is what is meant by *seeing the Truth of Dhamma*, and the one who truly knows this is the one who reveals Nibbaana. This one is the heart that is no longer shaken and upset by all the *worldly dhammas*.<sup>18</sup>

So then, shouldn't we try to reach the essential, the heart of the matter. As far as the aggregates and body go, well, we already have gone into that. It's the heart that really counts.

If any thing should break up and come apart, well, let it. That's the way the world goes along and it's been like that from time immemorial. We have followed that way for so long, dying and being born again and again... Continuing along the old highway.

This so-called 'highway' is really the common course of things, the way the world gets along. No one can block this path and all must follow it. Yet surely by now, you are starting to have an inkling of the truth. What else can I say... I can't present anything more. Please take this up and examine it with care. Don't be careless and complacent.

*"Endeavoring for the realization of Nibbaana is the highest blessing*

*— Nibbaana sacchikiriya ca etammangalamuttamam."*

And one day it must definitely belong to the followers of the Lord Buddha, to those who determinedly strive on.

May I close this Dhamma talk with that.

#### Notes

1. *boon* and *bahp*. (Thai)
2. "*Mano pubba.mgamaa dhammaa*"
3. *kusalaa dhammaa*; *akusalaa dhammaa*
4. *ruupa*
5. *upaadaana*
6. *sabhaava dhamma*
7. *sanyaa*
8. *naama-dhamma*; incorporeal.
9. offender = *nak tote*, offences = *tote* (Thai)
10. *sabhaava-dhamma*
11. *amata.m*
12. *vi-va.t.ta*; *va.t.ta-cakra*
13. from the Mangala Sutta, on the 'highest blessing.'
14. "*Nibbaanasacchikiriya ca etam ma.ngalamuttama.m*"
15. "*Phu.t.thassa lokadhammehi citta.m yassa na kampati, Asoka.m viraja.m khema.m etam ma.ngalamuttama.m.*"
16. *tapa dhamma*
17. *mahaa-sati*; *mahaa-panyaa*
18. *loka-dhamma*

## Developing the Samana in the Heart

Whenever Ven. Acharn Mun touched on this particular topic in his Dhamma talks or conversation, he would always say... I think it's in the *Muttodaya collection*.<sup>1</sup> But there it's only couched in general terms, whereas I recorded it in more detail than the compiler of *Muttodaya*. The Ven. Acharn himself didn't always go into detailed analysis but what he said was enough for us to understand the implications. When he brought up the whole tree trunk the finer points and branches would come along too.

What he said was this:

*"The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is pure by nature, but when it comes to stay in an ordinary worldling<sup>2</sup> it becomes counterfeit and is corrupted. Only when it's placed in a Noble One<sup>3</sup> is it the real, genuine Dhamma."*

That was the general way in which he described it.

There are many levels of Noble Ones: *Stream-enterers* are the first level, followed by *once-returners*, *nonreturners*<sup>4</sup> and then *arahants* as the fourth. When we analyze it in this way, we can then go on to say that in the hearts of stream-enterers, the *dhamma of stream-entry* is pure and true, but the *dhammas of once-returning*, *nonreturning* and *arahantship* are still corrupted. The stream-enterer may commit all these *dhammas* to memory and fully know the way to reach them, yet even so they remain falsified in his heart, in spite of his awareness.

The once-returner is still counterfeit on the levels of nonreturning and arahantship while the nonreturner remains false to the dhamma of arahantship. Only when arahantship is attained does every level of the Dhamma become fully complete in the heart, with no corruptions at all.

Some may argue that, *'since the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is real and pure, it must remain so wherever it might be. It can be compared with pure gold which though fallen in the mire is still pure gold. It can't turn into mud or muck.'*

If we fail to analyze this further, it does indeed seem that 'gold can't change into mud'. But who will deny that there isn't any mud around? The dirt is smeared over and contaminates the gold as they lie there together. Is there no difference between gold that has fallen in mud and that which hasn't? Of course there is. How can anyone assert that the pure, uncontaminated gold and slime covered gold are both equally pure? Surely, there must be a difference.

A second illustration could consider food, prepared and ready to eat. If the morsel was to drop from our fingers and land in some dirt, then what had been eminently eatable becomes unacceptable — and even offensively so. Alternatively, if the actual food container is soiled, then regardless of how succulent the food appears, once it's placed in the dirty vessel it too becomes contaminated. How can it remain pure when it's mixed with dirt?

The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is much the same. In this case the vessel equates to the heart, which alone is suitable for receiving Dhamma. However much the heart has been soiled will rub off on the Dhamma when it comes into contact and associates with it. It is this impurity that the Lord described as 'counterfeit and corrupted'.

Furthermore, although the palm-leaf scriptures are Dhamma, when we look them up and study them, we can only commit them to memory and retain them in mind. Yet that mind is already full with defilements so the Dhamma that comes into the heart is really more a *'rote-learned Dhamma'* than the genuine thing. If it is the authentic Dhamma, why don't the defilements all disappear from our hearts since each of us has studied and engraved it in our memory? We've gone into every intellectual aspect of Dhamma — including the subject of Nibbana — and yet we can't go beyond the fact that our hearts remain brimful with defilements. This is why *'Dhamma'* can be false.

Take up the Lord Buddha's Dhamma, both the theory and the practice,<sup>5</sup> and open it up through practicing what was correctly taught there. Only then will the true Dhamma begin to emerge from what has been memorized. We committed it to memory as an outline and plan, ready to put into practice, rather than just storing it away. It's similar to the building plans for a house. Regardless of how many hundreds or thousands of designs might have been drawn up, they are still merely specifications and not a house. It can't be properly called a house until its construction — following the blue print — is completed.

Committing it to memory for practical use is one thing, but simply to store it away without any interest in its practical application is something else. Whatever happens, that which has been studied must then be put into practice. Having practiced you'll then undoubtedly experience the *results of practice*,<sup>6</sup> which are steady, penetrating discernment and realization. We Buddhists should take both the theory and the practice as being basic to the Teaching, being its fundamental Dhamma. By so doing the *Teaching*<sup>7</sup> and its followers will excel in Dhamma, in virtue and in the knowledge and understanding that brings calm and peace to both the individual and all the community.

The case then is that the Teaching is merely retained in memory, or it just remains inscribed on palm leaves. The person goes one way, that which has been memorized goes another way and the way of practice goes in yet

another direction. They don't harmonize and are all in a constant state of conflict right there in the same individual. Furthermore, it also disturbs and annoys other people, making them wonder how the followers of the Lord Buddha can be in such a mess. Such criticism is well-founded and irrefutable. Whatever is wrong must be accepted as such.

Once the theory is put into practice, the results will be in harmony and you'll truly be able to understand according to your present ability. Whatever your practice has enabled you to experience in the heart can plainly be described. You'll be bold and confident when talking about them without fear of contradiction — for you've seen it for yourself. How could there be any misgivings? There'll be no scruples or twinge of conscience because it isn't a matter of guessing or blind hypothesizing. You spoke from your own experience and insight and didn't plagiarize anybody else. How can it be wrong and how can one be intimidated or shaken? Every one of us is seeking for the truth. We know the truth as far as our ability allows and can talk about it so far as we know it. How then can there be any diffidence or misgivings? There are none, of course.

It was never said that the Lord Buddha took a '*Nibbana course*' at any institution. Nor did he go to any school to study about the *Eightfold Path* or the *Middle Way of Practice*. On the contrary, this was something he taught himself through analysis and investigation leading up to Enlightenment. He realized and experienced Dhamma to his heart's contentment and then declared this Dhamma to the world. Who can be more accomplished than the Lord Buddha for he is a *Self-enlightened One*,<sup>8</sup> and the founder of the Way of Buddhism.

If we wish to match up to the Teaching, to find the way to growth and benefit, we must make ourselves worthy followers of that Noble Teaching. It then wouldn't be a case of vainly carrying the stack of scriptures. At the same time being unable to use them to make even a scratch on the defilements resident in the heart, or to gain any practical value. This doesn't measure up to the reputation of the Lord Buddha nor to the purpose of his Teaching, which is the removal and elimination of the defilements. Instead we shoulder the burden of the defilements by merely learning the Dhamma by rote. That's quite contrary to the purpose of the Teaching. And it explains how Dhamma becomes worldly and mundane.

The way for Dhamma really to be Dhamma is by the practice that I've already mentioned. When the texts have been studied and one turns to practice, only then will the truth be learned. This is because the Lord Buddha's way of teaching was the *Well-proclaimed Dhamma*.<sup>9</sup> It doesn't go wrong or deviate from this principle unless it's through the practitioner's own misunderstanding. If that happens, there isn't much that can be done because it runs contrary to the truth, which is Dhamma.

The Dhamma Teachings of the Lord Buddha are like merchandise that boldly challenge any test of validity or quality. This 'Dhamma merchandise', regardless of the market place, will put all the other products out of business because people are always on the lookout for a good and genuine product. Once they've seen it, how can they fail to recognize its worth — even small children can perceive that much.

However, Dhamma is no material commodity that can be advertised to compete with other products. It can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it, and can only be individually realized. Yet this isn't aimed at the accumulation of defilements, whether boastfulness or conceit. Every stage of insight and realization is for the sake of uprooting defilements, for these are inimical to both oneself and others. How then could one show off and boast — for that's promoting and exhibiting the defilements. That's enough to make anyone sick and it certainly isn't the way to get rid of them.

It's because of this that those who practice and understand anything about Dhamma appear serene and at peace. Their speech is appropriate to the circumstances and when there's no reason to say anything they remain silent. They are neither grasping nor covetous but live like a *samana*,<sup>10</sup> responding serenely and appropriately with words or stillness. This is what the Lord referred to when he said:

*"To behold a samana who is free from corruption and perversion is the highest blessing."*<sup>11</sup>

The *samana* here can be considered in four stages: The first is stream-enterer, the second nonreturner, the third once-returner and the arahant as the fourth.

The standard viewpoint refers to those who have become a *samana* by virtue of their attainment to the various levels of Dhamma: stream-entry, once-returning, nonreturning and *arahantship*. All of them are a blessing to those who look to them with respect. This is the *external samana*.

Turning within to the *internal samana*. We see the first, second and third *samana* in the heart by investigating the Dhamma-truth. It's this that uncovers the *Path* and the *Fruit* so that they can be clearly perceived within the heart. And it forms another of the *highest blessings*. We must turn inward for our own benefit, or else we will be constantly searching for the *external samana*, always speculating as to who is at what stage. None of the stream-enterers, once-returners, nonreturners or arahants wear labels or insignia like military officers, so how can we pick them out? And if they are genuine how can we know from their behavior and deportment? They would never flaunt their achievement in the gross way the world likes to indulge in. Those with impeccable virtue, who seek after and are imbued with the Truth and Dhamma, can't possibly behave in this way. Seeking out this kind of *samana* to pay our respects is far from easy. It's so difficult to know when we might come across them. Instead, we should take up the Teaching that points towards those four levels of *samana*, and with

application we'll be able to reach those same stages within ourselves. This is by far the most fitting way, and really gets us to the heart of the problem without wasting time in hunting for clues and chasing after shadows.

When we actually encounter a teacher imbued with truth and Dhamma, peaceful in body, speech and heart — or better still a first, second, third or fourth level *samana* — we mustn't let slip [the opportunity for] the first, second, third and fourth levels of *samana* that could appear within our own hearts. When the necessary conditions are fulfilled we would then definitely reap the fruits of our practice, because the Lord Buddha did not reserve those fruits exclusively to himself.

*Sota* means 'stream'. It is the entry into the stream of Nibbana. However, we tend rather to indulge in speculation, using various theories and models to try to work out what it's really like. '*How wide or narrow, how deep or shallow, how coarse or subtle, is this stream?*' This merely grows into subjective, emotional ideas without practical value. In fact, 'the stream' refers to the sphere of certitude and assurance of definitely reaching release from suffering.

Nevertheless, whatever happens, stream or no stream, as one who practices you should try to have inner peace. It is the heart itself that, with constant attention and wholesome care, will become Nibbana. A home is a home, a house is a house, earth is earth, water is water, air is air, and fire is fire. Neither earth, sky nor space can become Nibbana, nor lead one to Nibbana. Nor can they be developed into a stream-enterer, once-returned, nonreturner or an arahant. How then can it ever be possible to transform them into Nibbana? It is only the heart through Dhamma practice that is able steadily to uncover the darkness that shrouds the vision of the heart. Peace and happiness will then naturally occur. It hasn't happened before because of those dark things that continually try to provoke agitation in us. Day and night they disturb us with worry and anxiety and confusion... and in every position, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. These are the defilements that constantly agitate and disturb, choking out any peace and calm.

The defilements have been an endless source of trouble for all the creatures of the world — even though they may not have been recognized as such. In fact, people commonly hold them up as being something good, and never give a thought to letting them go. If they are really so wonderful, why is there all this grumbling we hear in the world? It's really the defilements that cause all our moaning because it's they that bring about suffering and hardship. So this is why the Lord taught that we have to develop the *samana dhamma*.

'Samana' here means calm and serenity. With calm, slowly but steadily, the first *samana* and the second and the third and the fourth, appears within our heart. Yet how do we practice to reach these four *samana*? The Lord explained this, in general terms, in the First Sermon, the *Turning of the Dhamma Wheel*.<sup>12</sup> Although there it wasn't presented in too great a detail so a beginner in the way of practice might find it quite difficult to understand.

The Lord spoke there about:

*"The Noble Truth of Suffering, that is, birth, old age and death are suffering, association with the unwanted is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering..."*<sup>13</sup>

This is the story of suffering. Now, how does this suffering come about? It arises from birth. Birth is the cause for the arising of suffering. The 'real agent of birth' has its root in '*ignorance conditions the arising of determinations*'.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, other than *avijjaa paccaya sankhaaraa* what else can condition birth? The Lord started right here at the principal determinant.

Ven. Acharn Mun's way of analysing it was very interesting. He said: "*Thiti bh tam avijjaa paccaya sankhaaraa*".

How is it possible for ignorance to arise and persist if it has nothing to depend on, no father and mother for its origin? It must rely on *thiti bhutam avijjaa paccaya sankhaaraa* as the basis for birth, for life and existence. This can then be separated into three categories:

*"Accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that, in other words, craving for sensual pleasure, craving for being, and craving for non-being."*<sup>15</sup>

The Lord called these the *Source of Suffering*. This is the Noble Truth, but what can be used to remedy it? The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering<sup>16</sup> is all about the darkening of the heart, about a nature that agitates and sullies. Thinking in material terms, it's as if the heart is all messed up with dirt and mud.

These *three cravings*<sup>17</sup> that are the source of suffering are the hankering and hunger, the inability to continue at ease, the loss of peace and the ability to live alone with oneself. Craving is necessarily hungry and ravenous, with a driven restless struggling towards sensual pleasure, being and non-being. This is putting it simply and vividly, for that's how it continually hounds and oppresses the heart.

The heart is unable to sustain its natural poise because these agents continually come in to upset and disturb so that it can't find any peace. How can we remedy this? The Lord taught the *Noble Truth of the Path*<sup>18</sup> that begins with *right view* and *right thought*. He described this as the Way to overcome that nature or condition that is responsible for creating, through the power of craving and discontent, all the upheaval and confusion. Once



anyone is consumed by desire [for something] — and it's just the same for animals — they will openly or covertly take up the chase and, using fair means or foul, grasp hold of it. This is due to compulsive craving, ambition and insatiability; with the heart struggling after its desires through torment and suffering.

Why suffering? Suffering because of *samudaya*. And it's this *cause* that oppresses the hearts of all beings. By day and night, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, beings of all the realms of existence come under its yoke. As each train of thought goes out only to be taken under its sway, what can we do to save the situation? The 'state of the art' instruments to use for the combating and the eradication of these three cravings from the heart are the *eight factors of the Path*. These are right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right samadhi. Nothing else can match the *Middle Way of Practice*.

This *right view* is the seeing of *what* rightly? For us here now, everything is wrongly seen and goes to make up the wrong views of desire for sensual pleasure, being and non-being. This is the way that our body and heart unflinching take.

Why should we feel affection and love? What's the reason behind it? Use mindfulness and wisdom to examine the body, which forms the immediate object of affection. We first cherish this body before being attracted to other bodies. This is where you'll find *sensual craving*.<sup>19</sup> You must get to the bottom of this and find out the reason for such love and affection. So, it's love for the skin, the flesh, the muscles, the bones, the hair of head and body — Is that it? But whether mine or whoevers', they're much the same. So what's with this fondness?

This analysis and dissection is called the *right view of the Path*. It's that discerning examination that searches out the object of attachment and the reason behind it. What value does this object of attachment bring? Really, instead of giving comfort, benefit and happiness, it brings a blazing fire to sear the heart with suffering and torment. It arises out of the false notion that such an object belongs to *me* and is *myself*. This is all nonsense. It's up to wisdom therefore to follow up and straighten out the wrong idea.

This was why the Lord taught about the investigation with *mindfulness of the body*.<sup>20</sup> Probe into it. Examine both inside and out, above and below, internally and externally. Do it thoroughly and judiciously, over and over again until you come to discern it clearly. This is the way of wisdom that is able to quash the craving and thirst of the defilements. It's only right view and right thought can overcome and cure us of our desires, for they are factors of the Eightfold Path. And that is the Noble Truth which tames every kind of defilement. This is the way we should go.

You must hit hard with mindfulness and wisdom, for this is the instrument that can counter any stratagem of the defilements. Without hesitating, carefully probe into anywhere that appears dark and obscure — for *that's* where the viper will be lurking. Whenever wisdom fails to follow up quickly enough, that becomes the place for the arising of the views of 'self', of 'creature or 'person', of 'me' or 'they', of 'mine' or 'theirs'.

Wisdom must therefore penetrate to see *according to the living scriptures* — which are this body and mind. The truth will then be revealed and there will be no more notions about 'person', 'animal', 'I' and 'they'. Once wisdom has fathomed the truth the conjurations and suppositions will be seen for the fraud they really are; having been designed by those masters of deception, the defilements. Wisdom then steadily follows through with its cleanup work until everything had been dealt with.

The heart, long crushed under the weight of attachment, will now be freed and uplifted through mindfulness and wisdom. The 'title deeds' of 'me' and 'mine', and the claims of territorial right, especially over the five aggregates, will be overturned. These claims have stood since birth — the flesh, the sinews and the bones, the arms and the legs. Each bodily part has been taken as 'me'. They have been declared 'me' and 'mine', even though they know nothing about such claims. We draw up the boundaries of our own domain, and as other things impinge or intrude they give rise to unease and pain, to suffering within the heart. It's suffering of heart, not only of body, which arises because of attraction and possessiveness in the setting out of our domain.

The Lord described this examination into the true state of things as 'investigating the *Noble Truth*,<sup>21</sup> with wisdom and right view'. In essence, this refers to the correct view concerning the four Noble Truths — the right view about Suffering, for instance.

*Right thought* is reflection aimed at uprooting defilements. The Lord divided this into three:

First, the non-holding of thoughts of malice or enmity against others.<sup>22</sup> This concerns all those defilements based in hostility and resentment.

Second, not thinking of being cruel to oneself or others.<sup>23</sup>

Third, is the thought and resolution to be free from all entanglement<sup>24</sup> — free from delight in sense pleasures, for example.

There's a natural principle that insists that before anything can go out to disturb other people, it must affect oneself first. This is where *right view* comes in to rectify matters, for the problem arises due to defilement-enforced *wrong view*. *Right thought* and *right view* coming together are like single strands spliced into a

strengthened cord. They are the heart's activity, the thinking processes, and together they become wisdom — the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the heart become one with the heart. When all eight strands combine and splice together as one, this is called *the Middle Way*. Ever since the time of the Lord Buddha this had formed the most fitting way to deal with the defilements.

Your investigation needs to be aimed at those things that are currently entangling the heart. They will have to be disentangled using the *Path* — *right thought* for example — for only this can rid the heart of defilements. By using mindfulness and wisdom we can investigate and challenge delusion in the arena of the body and aggregates. These will form our target so we must penetrate to their true nature. Personally, I find that it goes against the grain to teach from other angles — but elucidating on these themes goes right to the heart because these things are for real. The defilements and the Path are both found here. The Four Noble Truths exist right here.

As the Path steadily quells defilements, so the *Cessation* of suffering comes about, for it's dependent on the strength of the Path that is the factor moving things along. It is mindfulness and wisdom that subdue and eradicate defilements, systematically bringing about the cessation of suffering. It's no good thinking anyone can aim at putting an end to suffering without treading the Path. The Lord said that Cessation had to be clearly realized, yet the only way to achieve that is through the Path. Concentrating all one's efforts on knowing Cessation without having the Path to clear the way can't succeed, because this Dhamma is the fruit of the Path.

The Lord taught about all these conditions. However, the important principle to remember is that mindfulness and wisdom have to be fixed on a particular point, and from there they will steadily resonate through to all four Noble Truths. They simultaneously work together like the various parts of a single clockwork mechanism. Trying to distinguish each independent function would be as confusing as trying to follow individual ox tracks inside the stall. It's just not possible.

We therefore should investigate a single object within the *r pa* or *naama dhammas*, the body or mind. For example, by taking up one of the many different bodily parts. Although (painful) feeling may arise during this investigation, there shouldn't be any upset or bother because while the body is *r pa*, feeling is mental phenomenon (*naama*). Where is 'this self', 'this creature', 'this person', 'this me' or 'them'? All feeling, whether pleasant or painful, has similar characteristics — there's nothing there about self, creatures or people — and they're just mental phenomena arising in the heart.

The heart can be aware of an arising condition. That it has attributes of pain or pleasure and will disappear following those causes that lead to its ceasing. Alright then! There *is* a way for wisdom to discern the situation because these things really are present. They manifest themselves openly without being mysterious or hidden, entirely dependent on their root causes.

The bodily aggregate: We are with this body day in day out — putting it to bed, lulling it to sleep, discharging its wastes, standing it up and taking it for walks. The aggregate of feeling is also constantly manifesting itself, even right at this very moment. If it isn't pleasant, it's painful, as feelings alternate and change. The important point is that the heart doesn't take on board that pain and suffering. When pain is present, be aware that it is part of the aggregates, with their (built-in) impermanence, suffering and not-self. If you don't allow the heart to involve itself with them it won't be suffering.

Feeling — I've talked about this each day, so listen carefully and get to understand it. The defilements tenaciously cling to these five aggregates and they've done it day after day, for countless ages. This is why it's inadequate to think of making an examination every now and again. The occasional Dhamma talk is also insufficient, for the point needs repeatedly driving home until it is definitely understood.

You must also repeatedly examine this until you comprehend and then the letting-go will happen of itself. There! Get to see it clearly. Where is feeling, where is painful feeling? If it's present, you can't deny its existence nor make it in to something else. It must always be true to its natural state.

*Perception* is recollection.<sup>25</sup> We've been looking back from the day of our birth right up to the present. In all of that, have we managed to find anything that's of fundamental significance? If amongst it all there really were 'self', 'creature,' or 'person', then probably we wouldn't be able to find a chest big enough to store them all — because we're continually recalling more and more of them all the time. Yet really, as soon as they are recalled, they pass away without remainder. Listen then, what sort of essence can be found in them?

The *thinking processing*<sup>26</sup> perpetually concocts from dawn till dusk, dusk to dawn. Sometimes it thinks so much that it overheats and the heart becoming exhausted. This may continue to the point of nervous breakdown, and may even end up killing someone. For instance, take the person who pines away through some sorrow or disappointment. The defilements takeover this aggregate as their concocting-device, as their tool to keep up the pressure of proliferating thoughts and imaginings. Only mindfulness and wisdom can effectively check this proliferation.

When the defilements take over this recollecting and thought processing, they can pierce right through to the heart. The results are torment and suffering in no small measure. When it's worse than this it may end with insanity. We are tormented because of so much thinking, yet we don't ask ourselves whether it's all worthwhile.

*Consciousness*<sup>27</sup> is the plain awareness of an object present through contact, which then dies away together with it. Where in this is any core or substance to be found? It's here with these objects where we fall into delusion. Other than this it's merely the byproduct of the defilements.

These are the fundamental principles. This is the way to tread the Path of Practice and it is here that we must investigate to achieve clear insight. In other words, this is the Truth of the Path and is the means of correcting and overcoming our delusion. Then, as the result of our letting go, the heart can be at peace and free from all worries.

Death is a basic principle beyond the world's challenge or objection. The laws of impermanence, suffering and not-self are like a *highway*, for they shape the way and course of nature. If tenure isn't yet up (the body) won't break apart, but when the time finally comes, there's no stopping it — however tenaciously we may cling and hold back. It will just go its own way, along the *highway*, the *way of nature*, which takes precedence and can't be blocked or stayed. Nature must take its course, for this is an undeniable principle directing things throughout this world. We must investigate so that we can see according to their true nature — as they say, 'felling a tree from the windward side.'<sup>28</sup>

So don't go against the Lord Buddha's Dhamma that accords with the 'natural course', but rather achieve knowledge by following the truth. The heart will then be at peace. But when the heart coexists with the defilements, it dwells in confusion and consequently reaps suffering. We have already seen the harm of this and so must make sure the heart stays with Dhamma, with mindfulness and wisdom. The heart will then be safeguarded and at peace.

Strive to overcome these things known as 'defilements', wherever you find them. After dealing with the external ones turn to those involved with the body and then inside the heart itself. Deploy wisdom for a complete all-round penetration of them — these authors of the concepts of 'creature' and 'person'. All notions of 'self', of 'creature' and 'person' will cease to be a problem the moment the defilements have been entirely dispersed. They will disappear by themselves and we will no longer pointlessly fantasize about them. While the truth remains as it actually is, bringing peace of mind and freedom from all anxiety.

Yet this peace shouldn't be thought of as the Noble Truth itself — for that is concerned with suffering. It is the suffering of body and heart that is called the Truth of Suffering; the Truth of the Source of Suffering is the affair of all defilements and taints; the Truth of the Path, from *right view* through to *right samadhi*, is the instrument for the correction and eradication of defilements. The Truth of Cessation follows the steady extinguishing of suffering until the total penetrative realization of the nature of the Source is accomplished. The complete elimination of this Source — which though only existing within the heart makes up the principal culprit — together with that of the defilements is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

The *one that knows* the ending of suffering through the Path's destruction of the defilements, is the *one that knows freedom*.<sup>29</sup> That was the Noble Truth and *this is Freedom*. This is the purified one and it is not the Four Noble Truths — for they are the means to an end and when that end is reached they naturally lose their *raison d'être*, without need of coercion or force. It's a natural consequence; just as the stars lose their significance once we have climbed to our final goal, so traveling the Path comes to an end. Mindfulness and wisdom have accomplished their task and the heart has gone beyond — so their instrumental work in dispelling the defilements is over.

This is our arrival at the summit. It's the *Samana Dhamma*, the supreme *samana*, the fourth class of recluse. The first *samana* we encountered in our practice was the stream-enterer, the second was the once-returner and the third the nonreturner. The fourth *samana* is the arahant, the *Arahatta Dhamma*. This is the ultimate and final achievement realized through the Path of Practice, that most penetrating and luminous of ways.

The four *samanas* are now found within the heart — "*Etam mangalamuttamam*", the highest blessing arises there. There's no need to seek for it elsewhere because when the heart goes beyond all oppressive domination, to perfect purity, then that itself is the supreme blessing.

Whatever has been discussed here, about the four Noble Truths or the four *samanas*, is all found within the 'one that knows', and nowhere else. This is the one who can uphold the four *samanas* through the work of emancipation, and who arrives at freedom. In brief, 'that which knows' is the one 'with absolute certainty', in consistently being able to deal with anything that comes to awareness.

The defilements are capable of ruining many things but they can't destroy the heart. Although they may be up to bringing the heart to experience hardship and suffering, they can't possibly annihilate it. This nature is constant. It is upright and consistent, and only appears otherwise — taking on differing characteristics — because of the things it associates and involves itself with. Once shaken off and cleaned free of all stain, this nature is poised and wholly imperturbable. It's this that people call the 'perfect fourth samana', while in Dhamma terms it's the *Arahatta Dhamma* inside the heart.

This heart is now wholly Dhamma. The *citta*<sup>30</sup> is Dhamma; the Dhamma is *citta*. Whichever way you want to put it, this truth is beyond dispute. There can be no more contradictions because there are no more defilements left to agitate.

This is how all issues are resolved. They cease right here. Suffering ends here, birth and becoming finish at this point. It can't happen anywhere else. It was from here that birth and existence came into being — this one was the seed of birth and existence because it originates with the defilements, which were together with the heart. This is the reason why there is the wandering through the various realms of existence. There has been endless suffering, affliction, upset and hardship arising from this *seed*, that generates and perpetuates these experiences. Once the cankerous shell and fecund kernel can be completely cut out, every difficulty and problem will be removed.

Please take (what I've said) up, and make sure you examine it until you realize your situation and achieve the results. Whether woman or man, ordained or lay, the heart of those individuals who practice can attain to this insight and realization. All can succeed because it doesn't depend on gender, or age, or anything else like that.

Therefore, may I conclude this Dhamma talk with this.

#### Notes

**1.** A small collection of Dhamma teachings recollected by Ven. Acharn Mun's disciples. It is now translated into English as *A Heart Released*.

**2.** *puthujjana*

**3.** *ariya*

**4.** *sotaapanna, sakadaagami, anaagami*

**5.** *pariyatti, pa.tipatti*

**6.** *pa.tivedha*

**7.** *Saasanaa*

**8.** *Sabbanyuu*

**9.** *Svaakhaata Dhamma*

**10.** recluse, holy one.

**11.** "*Sama.naananyca dassana.m... etam ma.ngalamuttama.m.*" (From the Mangala Sutta.)

**12.** *Dhamma-cakka-pavattana Sutta*

**13.** "*Dukkha.m Ariya Sacca.m... Jaatipi dukkhaa jaraapi dukkhaa mara.nampi dukkha.m, soka parideva dukkha domanassa upaayaasa...*"

**14.** *avijjaa paccayaa sa.nkhaaraa*

**15.** "*Nandi-raaga sahaagata tatra tatra bhinandini seyyathida.m, kaamata.nhaa bhavata.nhaa vibhavata.nhaa.*"

**16.** *Samudaya Ariya Sacca.m*

**17.** *ta.nhaa*

**18.** *Magga Ariya Sacca.m*

**19.** *kaama-ta.nhaa*

**20.** *kaayagatasati*

**21.** *Sacca Dhamma*

**22.** *abyapaada sa.nkappo*

**23.** *avihi.msaa sa.nkappo*

**24.** *nekkhamma sa.nkappo*

**25.** *sanyaa*

**26.** *sa.nkhaara*

**27.** *vinyaa.na*

**28.** A Thai idiom meaning, 'to let nature take its own course'.

## 5. Letting Go (Magha Puja Day) □

Today is *Magha Puja*<sup>1</sup> day. It's the day when the Lord Buddha declared his intention to let go of the conditioned state, bidding goodbye to the world and to the prison of the cycle of birth and death. He chose to relinquish and discard his body after having carried it for eighty years, and throughout that period it had always been an oppressive load to bear.

But then, such is the nature of this body. Other things, in contrast, have their times of heaviness and lightness, occasionally allowing us to catch a breath. Carrying food and water (for example) are heavy when we first shoulder them but become progressively lighter as we steadily use them up. Yet we have been bearing the load of our body since birth and it never seems to get any lighter. It's always heavy. In fact, as we advance in years and decline in strength, it seems increasingly heavy. That is why the Lord Buddha asserted that:

*"These five aggregates are an extremely heavy burden."*<sup>2</sup>

Apart from shouldering the heavy load of this *form* or body, there is also painful feeling and the rest of the aggregates. They are not only heavy and oppressive but also have razor sharp barbs that pierce through our body and heart.

The Lord Buddha put up with this until he was eighty years old. To put it simply, he must have said:

*"Ah! This body is beyond bearing. It's time to leave it."*

Thus he declared that, in three months time he would relinquish his life and lay down the burden. He made the decision on the full moon day of the third lunar month.

On that very same day, twelve hundred and fifty *noble disciples*<sup>3</sup> assembled, spontaneously and without invitation, each coming through his own initiative. The Lord Buddha therefore presented this teaching to the arahant disciples, delighting them with the bliss of the Buddha-dhamma. The gathering thus became the *Pure Assembly*.<sup>4</sup> Here is a brief outline of what was said on that day:

*"Sabbapaapassa akara.na.m*, The not-doing of all evils,

*kusalass'uupasa.mpadaa*, The doing of what is good,

*Sacitta pariyodapana.m*, The purifying of one's own heart:

*eta.m Buddhaanasaasana.m*. This is the Teaching of the Buddhas.

*Anuupavaado anuupaghaato* Not insulting, not harming,

*paa.timokkhe ca sa.mvaro* Restraint according to the Patimokkha,

*Mattanyutaa ca bhattasmi.m* Moderation in taking food,

*pantanyca sayanaasana.m* Having a secluded place,

*Adhicitte ca aayogo*, Intent on the pure heart:

*eta.m Buddhaanasaasana.m*. This is the Teaching of the Buddhas."

The Buddha gave this teaching<sup>5</sup> to the twelve hundred and fifty as a form of diversion on that afternoon, which accords with today. For those *arahants*, it was more of an enjoyment than an exhortation because they were already pure, no longer needing instruction to cleanse the defilements from their hearts. That is why they were called the *Pure Assembly*. This was a unique event in the Buddha's teaching life, never again were 1250 arahant disciples to gather-and be offered such teaching.

We celebrate the Buddhas and arahants because of their prodigious and brilliant nature. They were figures of wonder among the majority of people because the worldly people's hearts remain corrupted by the staining defilements — not one of them could compare with the spotless arahants.

*"Sabbapaapassa akara.na.m"*: to refrain from unwholesome, down-casting actions that give rise to all kinds of suffering. It's this base side of the heart that is so critically important. Depraved actions and speech have natural limitations but the depravity of the heart, which depresses and down-casts itself, is propelled by our own continuous thinking and imagining. It's these agents that drive the heart into gloom and dark depression that are exactly the things in the heart that are already murky and defiled. The Lord Buddha named them 'defilements'.

They are those factors that manoeuvre and instigate memory and thought processes into action. While another sort of defilement causes the heart to become gloomy and disconsolate.

Wrongdoing and base deeds don't just refer to robbery, looting and plundering. That's evil on a gross level but we manage continually to generate similar depravities on the intermediate and more subtle level. This is equivalent to constantly depressing our own heart. This downcast heart will continue to be cast down wherever we may go because we are also generating depression for the heart. Walking, standing, sitting, lying down — the heart is always concocting and contriving and thus becoming miserable in every posture. One aspect of the Lord Buddha's teaching therefore is his emphasizing that we shouldn't indulge in creating gloom and misery for ourselves.

What method can we find to avoid this depression?

*"Kusalass' uupasampadaa"*: wisdom must be sufficiently developed to remedy this depression by cleaning out the gloom-makers and the base evils, we will then have:

*"Sacitta pariyodapana.m"*: a bright and cheerful heart. When our cleverness, which is mindfulness and wisdom, has cleaned out all the filth and gloom from the heart, it becomes bright and clear — *"sacitta pariyodapana.m"*.

The evil, whether great or small, will then start to wane as our heart becomes pure. The Teaching of all the Buddhas is like this. They all say: *"Do it this way. There's no alternative."*

Any alternative, easier way would have been known to the wisest of all, the Lord Buddha. He might have woven us all a hammock to lounge in, while we steadily swatted at and ridded ourselves of defilements. This might seem to accord with his fame as *a teacher full of love and compassion*, to a world full of frail and grumbling beings. In fact, the Lord Buddha had already used all his skill and ability in establishing *the shortest and most direct path*.

Each of the Buddhas had to cultivate the *perfections*<sup>6</sup> before realizing Buddhahood. They used the Dhamma in their hearts to drive out the defilements, and then taught this as the true and correct way. They tested and selected with the maximum power of their minds before discovering and teaching the Dhamma, which is most *suitable* for all living beings.

*Suitable* here does not mean that it fits in with people's own fancies, but rather that it points to a practice appropriate to overcoming their defilements. This is Dhamma. Nothing else can surpass *the Middle Way* of practice as passed on from the Lord Buddha. The defilements fear no other means, methods or *dhammas*. Nothing else can eject them from the heart, or even scratch their skins.

*"Anuupavaado"*: Don't slander other people.

*"Anuupaghaato"*: Don't harm or kill human beings or animals.

*"Paa.timokkhe ca sa.mvaro"*: Keep your behavior within the bounds of Dhamma, for this is the means of uprooting the defilements.

*"Mattanyutaa ca bhattasmi.m"*: Know the right measure in using food, and live simply and frugally. Don't indulge and exceed what is reasonable for one who practices. Know the right amount in whatever you're involved with.

*"Pantanyca sayanaasana.m"*: Look for seclusion, and use this solitude to deal with the defilements.

*"Adhicitte ca aayogo"*: Develop the heart to excel in Dhamma, employing mindfulness and wisdom, step by step.

*("Eta.m Buddhaanasaasana.m")*: This is the essence of the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

This was the Dhamma with which the Lord Buddha delighted all the noble disciples. To those who were not yet arahant, he also taught *"sabbapaapassa akarana.m"*. It is an essential practice, being the only way we can hope to use gradually to drive the defilements from our heart. Yet, do we truly take it to heart? Or is it rather that hammock hanging over there, that takes our fancy?

The essence of the pure Dhamma, imparted by each Buddha, is directly drawn from each of their hearts. But do we receive it into ours? The Lord Buddha bequeathed it with his great compassion. But do we receive it with full devotion and trust? With total mind and heart? If we merely feign acceptance of the Dhamma and later come to discard it, then it will all have been worthless. It would, in fact, have gone against the Lord Buddha's original intention.

The Lord Buddha decided to relinquish the body on the full moon of the sixth lunar month, and made the announcement to that effect on the third month's full moon — which is today. From that moment on, the constraints and irritations of the elements and aggregates would vanish. This is the *complete passing away without remainder*,<sup>7</sup> with no more concerns or obligations to any worldly condition. This is the *Dhamma*

*transcending the world. The ultimate Dhamma.*

'World' is the whole gamut of suppositions and assumptions existing in this world — the *three worlds* are the worlds of *supposition*<sup>8</sup> and change, the worlds governed by impermanence, suffering and not-self. Whatever one's birth or state, these three marks spin that world with confusion, and no one can bar their course. But once one has got beyond them, all concerns come to an end:

"*Nicchato parinibbuto*": craving totally ends, mundane suppositions are gone. It is out of this Dhamma that all the truths taught by the Lord Buddha resound. If we take this Dhamma deeply to heart in our practice, then it will '*ring and roar*' in our heart. At first, it will resonate in a cool, calm and peaceful condition of heart — which are the various levels of samadhi. Then, it will reverberate with wisdom in our thinking and analysis, so that we can steadily free ourselves. Finally, it will resound in the *pure*<sup>9</sup> state of complete freedom. There!

"*Nicchato parinibbuto*": craving is totally extinguished. The source of those cravings was defilement of every sort, because it is never sated or satisfied.

"*Natthi ta.nhaa samaa nadii*": the waters of river and ocean can't equal the defilement-inspired craving. They perpetually engulf the hearts of sentient beings and never run out.

How can we dry up these waters? We must bail them out using the energy of the one who practices until they eventually ebb and diminish. Draining and drawing out every day, examining every day, understanding and thereby relinquishing every day. The waters will then start to seem not quite so great. They are really only as large as our aggregates, that's all.

But for the heart that is attached to the aggregates, this is a weighty matter. The heart doesn't bother with any piece of land, instead it comes and seizes hold right *here*. This is the big issue, the hot and heavy concern. This is where the defilements scorch the heart as no other fire can, endlessly turning up the heat.

We have all heard about *floods*. When our lungs are flooded and congested, the doctor can drain them. But when the defilements, complete with craving, engulf the heart, what are we going to use to draw them off? We can only bring in *faith, energy, mindfulness and wisdom*. Thus, we must probe, examine and investigate to see things clearly, as they really are. What is being clung to? About what are false assumptions being made? And why is it that the voice of Dhamma, the aid in drawing-out, is never listened to?

The defilements usually try to play smart with the Buddha. They are his adversary and must always assert their cleverness against the Dhamma and contend with it. Grasping is the defilement's line while correcting and uprooting is the way of Dhamma. Extracting defilements with wisdom is Dhamma, and transcending them and arriving at serene happiness is the *Nibbana Dhamma*, or the *Pure Dhamma*.<sup>10</sup> There is always this rivalry.

Keep on trying! Don't lose out to these things, for you now have entered the boxing ring and must determine to be the champion. Fight without backing down. You'll have to be dead before you'll allow yourself to be carried out of the ring. If you've been floored but still live and can return to the fight, then battle on. If you can't manage to fight on anymore, then you can always denounce and curse them right there in the ring. What harm can that do? We are fighters and if we can no longer fight the defilements, then curse every mother and father of them. This is our single remaining weapon. We are down and cannot punch back, yet we still have a mouth. We can still talk, scold and curse even though we are knocked down.

Of course, this is only an analogy. To be a warrior doesn't mean that we go round cursing or abusing anyone, but rather that we combat the defilements. We must fight to the extent befitting a disciple of the *Tathagata*,<sup>11</sup> who was himself of the warrior class.

Have you ever noticed how our teachers and venerable *acharns* practiced? These meditation masters, whom we respect so deeply, were all warriors in this way. If that's how they themselves triumphed, why should they teach us to go in a different direction?

Alright then. Keep switching and varying your probe, using wisdom to stay on top of the events within. This wisdom is of such sharp discernment that it will be able to find a way to draw us out of the deep mire of elements and aggregates in which we've been stuck and buried for countless eons. Ultimately, we end up with the heart, and even here we have to pull everything out. The '*I*' must be extracted from *form*, from the body and from the elements of earth, water, air, and fire. We must pull the heart out of the painful feeling that we have taken on as ourself. The way to withdraw from *form* is simply to let go of the very *form* that we have grasped as self. We pull away from grasping each of the aggregates that we have taken as '*me*' and '*mine*'. Use wisdom to try and root-out, right here, keeping pace with whatever's going on.

The heart is subtle and extraordinary. The body, in contrast, is nothing special — however much we uphold and cling to it in our delusion. It can only be our utter stupidity that leads us so readily to shoulder this gross thing, without ever wanting to put it down. If we were really smart and considered what's behind it all, we would let it go. Why carry it? Probe and investigate these questions using mindfulness and wisdom that are available.

There's no need to go and be so afraid of dying. Fear itself is just another defilement. Why build up defilements by being frightened? We must rather build up our courage because this is a quality that counters the

defilements. Bring it out to fight the defilements and to find out what actually dies. In fact, nothing dies. And the defilements are always lying to us about it. The moment we are unguarded, they instantly insinuate themselves and whisper: "*When will I die... today?... tomorrow?... here?... or over there?... I'm going to die very soon.*" We upset ourselves with such thinking, while the elements just exist, indifferently. In this way we complicate matters and confuse ourselves by thinking that we are responsible. What sort of responsibility is this? It's more a matter of self-confusion than self-responsibility.

If we are to be truly self-responsible and self-reliant, then our heart will need full mindfulness and wisdom to use for investigation and rooting out. It must be able to probe and extract from the heart all the anxieties and confusions about living, about death and sickness — and whatever else is found there. There can be no easing off or allowing the defilements in to fool us. One can then say that those who practice in this way are truly being responsible for themselves. By investigating everything, both close in and all around, you will come to realize the true situation and be able to free the heart. Then there's contentment and relief. Contentment is found right here. Success and correctly assumed responsibility are also right here.

We hear news reports that so and so is an *arahant* — as in the case of those 1250 arahants — or that that person is a *stream-enterer*, *once-returner* or *nonreturner*. But what about ourselves? Our news is only about weakness, discouragement, depression, stupidity, dejection and confusion. This is our whole story. Doesn't it run contrary to the reports about those others?

Our personal news is exactly the opposite of those who possess the *Ariyan Treasure*, the *Dhamma Wealth* in their hearts. If our news only measures up to this, then it can only be concerned with the thousand-and-one kinds of suffering. It's more like 'sinking in the mud'. The unwanted news makes up our account, and because we create this story we must also bear the result.

Who is Dhamma intended for? Who is it taught for? Who makes up the Buddhist Community — if we can't be counted as members. Surely the Dhamma was taught and intended for us. Then what are we taught to overcome? Do we have the means for this purpose? Yes, they are right here — it's as if the Lord Buddha is right here before our very eyes, pointing them out to us. This isn't something about long ago or far away. It's fresh and vibrant right here. The Dhamma of the Lord Buddha exists here with us now, so why go elsewhere with all your worthless speculations?

*"The Buddha realized Nibbana in a distant time and place. He taught the Dhamma long ago and it has become stale and insipid. Its flavor can't last up until today."*

There! Listen to that! The defilements lie to us — can't we hear them? Beware of *Maara*<sup>12</sup> whose fabrications will destroy us with such ideas, mashing us to pulp. The Truth has no time or era and is there with everyone who is searching for it. How can Dhamma ever vanish with time? How can we kill the truth with these ideas, needlessly bringing utter ruin to ourselves?

Who in this world can know better than the Lord Buddha? The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha always stand challenging the defilements in the arena of truth. This is something *timeless*.<sup>13</sup> Therefore virtue, concentration and wisdom are never outmoded or behind the times. They're independent of period or place — and yet are within everyone. They can be produced at anytime, and whenever developed they grow and thrive. This is the way leading to the *Path*, *Fruit* and *Nibbaana*; which is timeless and independent of place. While the defilements for their part also manage a continued presence within the hearts of sentient beings.

We all now, as in the Buddha's time, have defilements. The overcoming of these defilements must still be done with the same old *virtue*, *concentration*, *wisdom*, *faith* and *effort*. How can this be kept far away and long ago from us? It cannot. We will all be able to go beyond suffering by rectifying the situation at the right spot and in the right way. Expose whatever is cloaking the heart by focusing with wisdom and mindfulness on whatever is dark and obscure, taking that spot as the target for investigation. Where exactly is this sadness and gloom? It's a condition of the heart that we can perceive, just as we know when darkness or light contacts our eyes. We notice that darkness is dark, but the one who knows is not also in the dark. Light is known; darkness is known; any amount of darkness can be known within our heart. And gloom and depression are also known together with brightness and cheerfulness.

The one who knows, knows in this way. We must make wisdom penetrate further, taking the heart or these things as its target. When sadness and gloom appear within the heart, don't be alarmed, or glad or regretful. Look on them as mental conditions that must be investigated, as things that arise and cease. They're not of the heart but simply depend on it to appear and then hook into it. Persevere with the examination but don't get excited or unsettled with the objects themselves. Whatever arises and passes through — that we must know. Then we can be counted as being one who takes up the study and practice. We have to *study* until we know through wisdom and can understand those things that appear within ourselves. This true knowingness has no ups and downs. It is never like that. A condition arises and the one who practices recognizes it as such.

When all these conditions end, so does any concern about them. All that is left is the consummate state of purity. Our investigations depended on the continual encountering with such conditions in the heart. If they were around they would need to declare their existence, so that it's always possible to know the true state of affairs. Therefore, if we want the truth, we must look for and investigate the feelings that arise, and similarly



with any sadness or cheerfulness, any happiness or suffering that appear. Such is the way of one who knows with all-round wisdom, being aware of any condition that resides with the heart. There is only this one place where we can finish off our studies.

They talk of graduating with a Bachelor degree or a Masters' or Doctorate; or of passing the various exams of *Paali* language study, following the popular convention of the time. Throughout the ages people with defilements have always had to rely on customs and observances and these are numerous beyond description. The ways of Dhamma though always remain current because their nature is constant and immutable.

You can have as many grades and degrees as you like — level fifteen or level thirty<sup>14</sup>... But I wonder if defilements bother with such things. They just have a great time, singing away there on top of people's hearts. Since when were they meeker and more humble than people? They wield greater power than people — stupid people, that is. Intelligent people are able to crush and destroy them and this is the way to gain our knowledge and qualification.

Our *Bachelor's degree* of virtue, samadhi and wisdom is all around us — better to take this *B.A.*. Then on to the *Masters'* and the *premier 'Ek'* grade so that we have '*one heart, One Dhamma*'. But this isn't the *preeminence* of someone with only *one eye*, who is already nearly blind. Don't be *foremost* in that way.<sup>15</sup>

The true *preeminence* of the Lord Buddha is '*one heart One Dhamma*'. Study up to this *Ph.D.* by having all-round knowledge to the *highest* degree, replacing our ignorance with knowledge about ourselves. Inspect, using wisdom to probe and clear-up, until reaching the *Highest Dhamma level*, or the *genuine Dhamma*, which are the same. 'The heart and Dhamma are one and the same!'

"*Buddha.m, Dhamma.m, Sangha.m sara.na.m gacchaami*" — finding refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha falls completely within this One Dhamma.

"*Dhammo padiipo*" — the radiance of Dhamma always shining brightly. This is the genuine Dhamma. It is *timeless* and unconditioned... the true Dhamma.

Alright then — build the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha right here within the heart:

"*Buddha.m, Dhamma.m, Sangha.m sara.na.m gacchaami*. We go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha."

More precisely, we arrive at the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha in the purity inside the heart, for this is the coming together of all *three refuges*. See them clearly within the heart and make yourself a refuge within. This is the complete "*attaahi attano naatho*": 'We are our own refuge, not needing to depend on anything else.'

As is the Buddha so is Dhamma and Sangha. Buddha Dhamma Sangha are the same. When one has reached this stage there's no need to go out seeking to pay respects to the Lord Buddha, for we can now offer this purity of heart — the whole Dhamma of this purity — as our *puja*-offering to him. Nothing else intermeshes and fits together as well. As is the Buddha of the Lord Buddha so is the *Buddha* of us. As is that Dhamma, so this *Dhamma* here. Without doubt, they are all one and the same.

Did the Lord Buddha *finally pass away*<sup>16</sup> so long ago? We no longer ask, because this concerns the conditioned state of elements, the body and aggregates. The Lord merely let go of his aggregates, at a certain time, in a certain year and place. The Noble Disciples were just the same. Were they all completely annihilated after they passed away? Is it really like that? This is the view of empty, worthless men and women; the truth is otherwise. The real Dhamma is that of *supreme happiness*,<sup>17</sup> which endorses and confirms the fruit of that purity.

What is *Sangho*? It is the one who upholds the state of purity. This is the true *sangho* and is found within ourselves: "*Attaahi attano naatho*" — 'oneself is one's own protector'. The vital point is to make this refuge sufficiently secure, for it's imperative that the heart frees itself from all dangers and attains to deliverance. Whatever is worth attaining is worth striving for. Go for it right here.

Don't upset yourself over anything at all. Nothing really matters in this world. It's just that our heart goes and gets involved. We actually go looking for affairs to indulge our-self in, and this needs cutting away with mindfulness and wisdom.

Wherever we are, we are always alone. We are born alone. When illness comes, it isn't the assembled relatives that are in pain. When we die, we die alone — nobody else can die in our place or deputize for our distress. Therefore, we must help ourselves — *Attaahi attano naatho* — using our own mindfulness and wisdom. This is the right and most fitting response.

The Lord Buddha decided to let go of his life on this same full moon day. For us today, we should resolve to abandon craving and defilements. These are the essential things that one must be rid of.

As far as dying is concerned, the Lord Buddha said it wasn't important which day we die on. Whenever the breath runs out, that is the day we die. The only criterion is our last breath. If there's still breath, then we haven't yet died. So we keep on breathing... which in itself is no great problem. It's really just about a lot of wind.

The important point is the founding of a base and the putting ourselves on alert — all for the sake of our heart. "Attaahi attano naatho": 'oneself is one's own protector'. When this is accomplished then there is contentment in living or dying, wherever and whenever it might take place. No more problems remain, for they were only concerned with mundane conditions.

That's it for this talk on Dhamma. I think it's suitable to stop here.

### Notes

1. *Maagha Puuja* is the national holiday in Thailand dedicated to the Sangha Jewel. (*Visaakha Puuja* in May and *Aasaalha Puuja* in July are for the Buddha and Dhamma.)
2. "bhaaraa have panyca khandhaa"
3. *ariya saavakaa*
4. *Visuddhi Uposatha*
5. *Dhammapada*, vv: 183 and 185
6. *paaramii*
7. *anupaadisesa-nibbaana*.
8. *sammuti*
9. *visuddhi*
10. *Visuddhi Dhamma*
11. See Glossary.
12. *Maara* usually personified as the Evil One, or tempter. And here referring to misleading, evil thoughts.
13. *akaaliko*
14. Pali language is examined in just nine grades.
15. A play on the word *ek* or *eka*, which in Thai can mean: 'highest' or 'first' (as in Ph.D.); 'one' or 'singular' (as in 'one eye' and 'One Dhamma') so *eka-grade*, *eka-eye*, and *Eka Dhamma*.
16. *parinibbaana*
17. *parama.m sukha.m*

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## 6. The Final Night — Fare Thee Well □

No one can surpass the Lord Buddha in wishing for people to be virtuous and good. His Teaching was offered so that people in the world might find goodness and happiness. He didn't want the world to be troubled and hurt through misdeeds arising from ignorance of the right way of conduct. The building up of the *perfections* 1 to become a Buddha, full of compassion for all sentient beings, was an exacting task — very different from all other forms of achievement. And his mastery went along with his compassion, hand in hand.

Anyone listening to the Lord Buddha's teachings — from his own lips or from the scriptures — and trusting those principles of truth would then try to correct and improve themselves, so as to be a virtuous person. One individual takes it up, and a second, and then each family member, however many there might, be all change themselves for the better. *One* virtuous person — but when such people live together it becomes one virtuous family-circle, and then one virtuous village, and town and country. There's no need to ask about the whole country's peace and stability for it must definitely follow from the goodness of all its individual citizens.

On the other hand, hardship and discontent only arise because of wrong doings and baseness. The number of corrupted individuals corresponds to the extent that the body of society is stuck with '*splinters and thorns*'. The more there are, the more hellish the world becomes. It is then dark both in the night and daytime, and is in a constant state of disturbance. There is no need to go and search after hell for it is being forged right there in the hearts of people. From there it spreads and extends everywhere, turning all to fire. This only happens because of those wrongdoings, not because of what is skillful and right.

When things are in harmony with the Buddha Dhamma such a situation can't arise. There would then be no need for judges, courts of appeal or a supreme court. There would be no cases to settle because everyone is intent on living virtuously, all trying to follow a just and sensible way together. In discussions there would be

mutual understanding — it wouldn't matter if it were between young and old, man and woman, ordained and householder. This springs from a deep understanding of the nature and reasons for goodness and baseness that is within one's heart. There only would be the wish and intention to see in the way of reason, truth, and virtue. Everyone would listen sympathetically to one another, and always conduct themselves fairly and justly with no need for secrecy.

The world, however, doesn't seem to follow the heart's wish. Wherever one goes, there are only complaints about suffering and misfortune. The whole earth seems to be in a state of confusion and unrest, even though everyone studies and searches for knowledge. This knowledge, however, doesn't appear to be of much use — it might even end up burning one instead — because it isn't knowledge imbued with Dhamma. It doesn't have Dhamma to add a protective coat or to act as a support, a brake, an accelerator, or steering-wheel. It therefore trundles forward in any old direction, without any limit or bounds.

When examined in this light, the value and importance of the Lord Buddha's Dhamma stands out clearly. The individual effort to change oneself for the better, even though one can't do the same for anyone else, will provide peace and contentment wherever one is. Such happiness will result from your right actions and way of living, and this will follow for anyone who practices in the same way.

This *right way* and *contentment* have a series of levels — everyone being able to step up to the general level with the right intention and effort. Don't allow yourself to miss out on this, for the world can be worth living in and can bring happiness, peace, and joy. Beyond this mundane joy lies the prospect of progress and happiness within the heart itself. However, it does need commitment and energy to achieve this subtle and more refined type of happiness.

Those who are especially interested in the way of meditation<sup>2</sup> really stand in the front line — if this is considered in images of going to war and battle. Those who decide on this approach can't afford to be weak and faint-hearted. Whatever they attempt will require vigilance, and such exertion will then steadily develop in them a consistent and stable mindfulness. Any lack of this and they won't be considered tough enough to succeed in the war.

This toughness depends on an alert effort, together with mindfulness and wisdom checking on the behavior to see whether it is going in the right or wrong way. As this becomes increasingly subtle and involved, it is more and more necessary to depend on the protection of mindfulness and wisdom. The *stream of the heart* and its various imaginings and concoctions will not then go and amass poisonous ideas and emotional objects with which to burn and torment itself. Once the heart has received proper care and nurturing it will gradually come to peace, and be radiant and happy without any fading into downhearted dullness, as it did before.

All of you have been training here for quite a long time, so please draw into your heart the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. Don't think that you'll be leaving<sup>3</sup> your teacher and monastery behind. Your departure is only an activity or physical movement. The important thing to remember are the Lord Buddha's words:

*"Anyone who practices Dhamma in accordance with the way of Dhamma, is truly one who offers reverence to the Tathagata."*

That practice is the way of *mindfulness, wisdom, faith and diligent effort*. It has to be there in every posture and at all times. This right conduct within the heart, together with continuous watchfulness is what is meant by *'practicing Dhamma following the Way and giving constant reverence to the Tathagata'*, the Lord Buddha.

The Lord Buddha continued:

*"Whoever sees Dhamma, sees the Tathagata."*

How does one see, know and practice so as to see this Dhamma? It's by practicing as we are doing now, and especially refers to meditation. This is the way of practicing Dhamma. Seeing Dhamma is discerning those obstructions present within oneself that should be counted 'the enemy'. These are the first two Noble Truths, that of *Suffering* and its *Cause*.

We investigate these things to penetrate to their true nature, which exists in every human being and animal — the only exception being the *arahant* who has gone beyond. The rest of us must possess this *Cause* to some degree, and it's this that he called the *Noble Truth*. By examining and seeing Dhamma in the true state of affairs, it's then possible to turn to letting go and uprooting. This results in coolness and peace within. This letting go and uprooting is also termed 'seeing Dhamma', for it is a gradual seeing, level by level, step by step, until one finally perceives the whole Tathagata.

We can speak about these levels of attainment in this way: Those who have practiced up to *stream-entry*<sup>4</sup> can be said to have seen the Lord Buddha at one level, having penetrated into the stream of Dhamma. It is the beginning of seeing, as if you are standing in a field and can glimpse the Lord in the distance. The *once-returned*<sup>5</sup> stage seems to bring the Lord a little closer and the *nonreturner*<sup>6</sup> sees him closer still. Until finally, with the *arahant*<sup>7</sup> stage, you see the Lord Buddha in full. The Dhamma that facilitates our reaching each of these stages resides with everyone of us.

Holding to the practice is like following behind and sighting the *Tathagata*. One sees him by way of *cause*, which is our practice; and by way of *result*, which is the steadily attained fruit of that practice. The Lord Buddha went this way before, seeing and steadily realizing and passing beyond.

Therefore, the heart of the one who practices is never apart from the Lord Buddha, Dhamma, or the Sangha. By virtue of that practice, reverence is given to the *Tathagata*, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. This is true reverence and is the way — through diligent effort — of having continuous audience with the Lord Buddha.

Departing and going away is only *activity*. There is a departing right here when, for example, after sitting here you leave to sit over there; from there you return to sit here. There is a continual departing. You shouldn't be concerned with leaving this place for that, this town for that, this house for elsewhere. Leaving from here for far or near — there is continual departing in this world of impermanence where things are constantly changing.

By using the *three marks*<sup>8</sup> we can reflect upon these things so that it becomes a Dhamma lesson. Those who truly know and see will always depend on this principle as the way to move forward. While we are here we practice Dhamma and when we are there we practice Dhamma — because it is aimed at letting go, at eradicating defilements and ending all the suffering within the heart. We practice wherever we are so as to uproot and release, and for this purpose our present location isn't relevant.

The Lord Buddha therefore taught the Noble Disciples:

*"Go bhikkhus, and seek secluded places. Be steadfast and resolute there. This is the way to have constant audience with the Tathagata. There is no need for all of you to come here to gather around the Tathagata. That is not the way. But rather, whoever has mindfulness and is diligent in all postures immediately gives reverence and has audience with the Tathagata. Nonchalantly sitting around here is not the way to meet, nor to see or have audience with the Tathagata. The Tathagata does not regard the coming here and the going away as having an audience with or taking leave of the Tathagata. The Tathagata considers that diligence in the practice to eradicate defilements from the heart, whether little or much, as steadily gaining audience with the Tathagata."*

This is the progressive seeing of the *Tathagata*. It is the major principle in the Teaching that allows a clear sight of the *Tathagata*, rather than peering with dim and blurry eyes, lacking in mindfulness. Just completely rid yourselves of the poisons in the heart, and then compare the resulting state that you have realized — is there any difference between that nature and the *Tathagata*? Plainly, without question, such a purified nature is identical with it. Listen! The essence of the Lord Buddha's teaching is just like this.

Training your heart and developing yourself into a good person is the way to accumulate happiness. With increasing growth within the heart the result will, of course, be happiness. Not being able to find happiness or it being incomplete, arises because of obstructions in the heart, which are the defilements. Nothing else is able to obstruct and pierce the hearts of all sentient beings, preventing them from finding happiness and fulfillment. Suffering and hardship, whether internal or external, is solely caused by defilements. For example, when the body is feverish or ill, the defilements will also get in the act by moaning about the pain here or the ache there. This disturbs and worries, which adds yet another load of suffering for the heart, to go with the bodily illness.

Common bodily upset or illness was experienced by both the Lord Buddha and the Noble Disciples. It's the nature of the aggregates to be ruled by the *this-worldly*<sup>9</sup> law of the *three marks*. Whoever has aggregates and elements cannot go beyond this worldly norm, with the inevitable consequences of change and impermanence. However, their hearts did not waver because there was already total understanding of the state of things.

But it's not like that for us. When we have bodily pain, whether much or little, it also shows in the heart that accumulates additional suffering. The amount can't be estimated but sometimes the suffering within the heart becomes greater than that of the body.

This is what is meant by 'an encompassing infiltration by the defilements', when we are absent-minded and careless. When there is no mindfulness and wisdom to know what the defilements are up to, they can penetrate in every possible way, regardless of time, place or posture. All that's necessary is for the heart to move and show itself without mindfulness, and *wisdom* becomes more like *perceiving-memory*.<sup>10</sup> It's as if the heart becomes the defilement's unknowing helper. In such a situation Dhamma can't possibly arise and it can only go the way of the defilements and their steady increase. It's therefore necessary to throw in the full force of your mindfulness and wisdom, faith and energy, to keep up with the events happening within the heart.

Research into these elements and aggregates will make you an outstanding person but graduation from any other kind of study will never be enough. There will still be the thirst for more, much like anything in this world. However, when your studies into the elements, aggregates and heart are completed, that thirst will also be ended. You will find complete fulfillment.

At present you are deficient in the theory of *Aggregate-ology* and the application and practice of it. This is really about mindfulness and wisdom, and the penetrative insight into the true nature of the elements and aggregates. It is analysis by separating the true from the false. But when the study is not yet concluded or understood, endless confusion and turmoil will remain with the elements, aggregates and heart.

There is no confusion and agitation worse than that found in the elements, the aggregates and heart. This is where all sorts of complications are constantly emerging because we have yet to clear them up. This indictment can only be dismissed through the studying of the case right there, with mindfulness and wisdom disentangling the truth and giving judgment after careful deliberation.

Alright! Let's wind up these studies. What is there in these elements and aggregates — as I've always said, there's:

*Form aggregate*, which is everything in this body of ours.

*Feeling aggregate*, which comprises painful, pleasant and neutral feelings, that arise within the body and heart.

*Perception aggregate* is memory and assumed knowledge of various things.

*Thought processing* is the creative, concocting faculty of the heart that thinks about virtue or wickedness, past or future, without any limitation.

*Consciousness aggregate*, which acknowledges forms, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile objects as they come into contact with the senses. And at that moment reports them to the heart to acknowledge. Once that contact ends the consciousness lapses as the object passes. This is called *consciousness of the five aggregates*.<sup>11</sup>

The *consciousness of the five aggregates* is different from the *re-linking consciousness*.<sup>12</sup> This refers to *mind*<sup>13</sup> and particularly to the heart. It is the heart that is about to enter into *re-linking consciousness*, taking birth in the various forms of existence. The consciousness of the five aggregates arises and ceases with the things that come into contact with it. That is, the acknowledgement ceases along with the passing away of those things. The *re-linking consciousness* however, refers to the heart that possesses the faculty of knowing, alone and by itself. Even if nothing makes contact with it, it doesn't end.

Study these five aggregates — and do it exhaustively. Keep on going over it, revising and researching until you can understand. This is the field of work for anyone wanting to be rid of defilements and craving, by the demolishing of the *cycle of birth and death*.<sup>14</sup> The heart spins through birth in various forms of existence, endlessly roving and reserving itself a place in cemeteries all over the place. The reservation is made even before death. This is all due to delusion — ignorance about the true nature of the aggregates. We grasp at more of them even though we already have a heap of them. There's never enough, so we fall and catch hold of them without limit — unless, of course, wisdom can be called in to investigate.

Analyze and investigate so that you come to true knowledge and can therefore cut free the attachment. Take up the study of the elements and aggregates — or take this body, for therein lies the 'substance' of the *Noble Truth* and the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. These are synonyms for the same thing and can (practically) replace each other in our investigations.

We will find that they are all essentially concerned with the *Noble Truths* and the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. Normally, without illness or disease, the body exists simply as the body, and *form* is still just *form*. However, when the body changes and becomes abnormal and disordered, it then follows its (new) natural course. The painful feeling that arises due to this irregularity does not remain for long and you should just let the heart know it for what it is. This is the way to study *Aggregate-ology*. Don't be alarmed or frightened, or depressed with them; for this is their normal, inevitable course in the world.<sup>15</sup> They have to follow a progressive transformation with both subtle, unnoticed changes and marked changes. They change in accordance with their nature — at every period, every second. But perhaps even a 'second' is too long a time, rather make it every instant, all the time. They just change, continually change. There is no pause, no taking time off for rest and sleep like animals and people do.

As for suffering, that also manifests itself constantly, without stopping for sleep or rest. People may take time off for leisure and recuperation but that doesn't apply to the Noble Truths and 'the three marks'. They never stop, never ease off with anybody. They proceed along their course both day and night; with standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. The condition of these things is to turn through their changes. This body, too, revolves, as it changes its position and state. We sit for a little while and then an ache appears. Have things changed? Well, if they haven't what's this pain doing here?

This ache is called *painful feeling*. It is one sort of condition that arises in our awareness, one aspect of the Noble Truths. Examine it and see it as it really is, for in the last resort there's no alternative. To think that you can depend on some other person is a misreading of the situation. Something that will drain your resolve, leaving you weak and disheartened in the task of saving yourself. Such wrong understanding or misapprehension comes from the defilement's subversive insinuations, constantly deceiving you. This happens both in normal times and in times of sickness and emergency, cutting the ground from under your feet by means of their trickery.

When the final time is really drawing near, it is like a boxer in the ring. Before climbing into the ring the trainer can teach and instruct, but once in the ring there is no way to teach anything more. Right or wrong, good or bad, alive or dead — you now have to rely and help yourself to the utmost. It's now too late to learn any new boxing

techniques.

The time of going into battle is that of the final moment when the aggregates and the heart are going their separate ways. It is the time of breaking up. It is like when crows and vultures come down and sit together on the branches of a tree. When they alighted, the branches hardly shook at all but when they fly away they jolt the branches until the whole tree vibrates. Any dry, dead branches will break and fall in the process.

At the time when the body is departing, how hard will it shake us? How are we going to stand up to this shaking — with mindfulness and wisdom, that's how. Without them we definitely won't be able to bear it and will lose our balance and control. We must therefore fight to the fullest capacity of our mindfulness and wisdom. Don't even think about the possibility of collapsing in the fight. Our vigorous questioning of the truth about the nature of the body is aimed towards gaining release, not towards destruction. This is the chief way to help oneself in a critical situation, by using all one's strength, and is the right course recommended by the wise.

When the time of emergency arrives it will be all pain — clearly showing itself throughout every part of the body as if each piece is burning. Inside, the body will be like a blazing, red-hot furnace. So, what are we going to do now? Mindfulness and wisdom must be sighted on that heat, that suffering and pain. Clearly discerning we can then turn and observe our heart. Is the heart also red-hot? Or is it only the body and aggregates that are on fire? If you are already well-practiced in using mindfulness and wisdom, you'll find that the heart is cool and unaffected even in the midst of such a conflagration. It is the body that is burning with the flames of suffering. This is how we who practice must see it.

This is the way of self-help, without leaning on any one else, for you are already up in there in the fighting ring. Once you are determined to fight, then fight using reason and your full strength. *"Come what may! Live or die! Who cares who might have to carry me out of the ring."* It's a fight to the end — but fight cleverly, don't just close your eyes and allow yourself to be like a dummy accepting all the punishment without blocking or returning punches. That's useless! Fight with energy putting your life on the line. If you have to die, then so be it. But there'll be no retreat. Use your mindfulness and wisdom that is tuned to be the most advanced weapon going.

Battling with *feeling* means penetrating to its true nature. Don't attempt to force it to disappear for that is trying to go against feeling's natural course. The only way is to examine it as it really is and then let it disappear of itself. If it still lingers then realize that that's how things are, and don't go in and grasp hold of it.

*Form* [16](#) is *form* — don't bring in anything to contradict this or make it something else. Form is form; body is body, and it's just body, just form. *Feeling* [17](#) is *feeling* — whether it's painful, pleasant or neutral, it's really only feeling.

What is this that knows body, knows feeling? It's the heart, of course. The heart is not of that nature and must be separated and clearly seen with wisdom. This is truly seeing the Noble Truth and there will now be no wavering even if the body can't endure. Right then. Let's turn and face the battle, let's see what will go first and what will outlast. With our confidence riding with mindfulness and wisdom we'll know the truth that the heart is not the one that dies, but is that which is there to acknowledge whatever is present.

Alright then, whatever is impermanent — may it go its way. The body can't endure? Then let it break up. Feelings don't last, well, let them dissolve. If it's impermanent, then let it all disperse. However, whatever endures will last and prevail. What is it that prevails? It is that which knows, which is the heart. There! It's the one who knows standing out distinctly all the time.

The results will definitely be like this once you have successfully trained yourself in the way of mindfulness and wisdom. But if your mindfulness and wisdom are deficient then the heart will remain feeble and easily discouraged. All kinds of suffering will then converge into the heart because it is the heart itself that accumulates suffering through its own stupidity. Weakness, therefore, is certainly not the path that leads away from harm and danger. It has to be accomplished through diligence and hard work, with a warrior spirit armed with mindfulness and wisdom. Nothing else can bring victory and preeminence, goodness and virtue, excellence and distinction; nothing else brings bravery and fearlessness to arise within the heart.

Please consider it in this way: Suppose that we return home without a teacher or instructor. Well, what teaching have we already received and what are we really missing? The teacher is still present in his teaching, and it's there that we'll find the Tathagata and the Dhamma. We are with the Dhamma, with the Lord Buddha, and with the Sangha at all times because of the Teaching that we train ourselves with. We do *not* lack a teacher or an instructor. We live with a refuge in having mindfulness, wisdom, faith, and energy out fighting to destroy those things that are our enemy. How can we say we are without a teacher when we exist with our teacher! So we must strive to gain knowledge together with this teacher.

This is the way to practice, without loneliness or wavering but endowed with firmness and steadfastness in the truth of Dhamma. The teacher's instructions are constantly embraced as the internal guide within the heart. Wherever we may be, we can say that we are with a teacher, with an instructor, with the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha — because the real Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha are within the heart. It is only the heart that can be with Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, or the whole essence of Dhamma.

The *body* doesn't know anything. How on earth can it ever know anything about the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha? *Feeling* also doesn't know; while *perception* just remembers and then it's gone; and *thought processing* imagines and then vanishes. How can there be any basis in them sufficient to accommodate the Lord Buddha? The one who can truly receive, is that which really understands the Lord Buddha. The real Buddha is just this heart.

So, investigate the heart to your utmost. Don't be weak or discouraged. In any case, all of us must eventually enter into this battle. It's unavoidable. All we can do is to help ourselves, and it's very certain that we will need to help ourselves. When the time of necessity is upon us, nobody else can help. Whether father or mother, son or daughter, husband or wife, they can only stand by and watch with affection, sympathy, and yearning. They all long to help but when the time comes, they are powerless.

The only things that can help us transcend suffering and torment, and to be free from all bondage, are mindfulness, wisdom and our own effort. There is nothing else. We must therefore be strict with ourselves, be firm at heart, even if the body is nearing its end. From this moment on, this is something to keep close to your heart. Then you won't lose out later on.

However the aggregates might display themselves, the one certain thing is that they aren't above death. Whether they appear often or not, they will come to die. So the *one who knows* knows till death, at which time the body dissolves and that which knows is rid of all problems and obligations. Let's get down to the crux of the matter. Right to the essence of truth, of cause and effect. Then we will arrive at the real and genuine Dhamma within the heart.

This Dhamma presentation seems enough; so I'll finish here.

#### Notes

- [1.](#) *paaramii*
- [2.](#) *citta-bhaavanaa*
- [3.](#) The next day Khun Pow was due to return to home... and hospital.
- [4.](#) *sotaapatti-magga* and *-phala*
- [5.](#) *sakadaagaamii*
- [6.](#) *anaagaamii*
- [7.](#) *arahatta-phala*
- [8.](#) *ti-lakkha.na*
- [9.](#) *sammuti*
- [10.](#) *panyaa* and *sanyaa*
- [11.](#) *vinyaa.na khandha*
- [12.](#) *pa.tisandhi-vinyaana*
- [13.](#) *mano*
- [14.](#) *va.t.ta*
- [15.](#) *sammuti*
- [16.](#) *ruupa*
- [17.](#) *vedanaa*

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## 7. The Middle Way ◻

Listening to a Dhamma talk<sup>1</sup> keep your attention in the present. Don't send the mind outward but keep it focused within, you'll then be able to experience the true taste of Dhamma right in your heart. It has been taught that one may gain five benefits while listening to a Dhamma talk. Then there are also those benefits that come to fruition in the future that are extra gains. This is the reason that so many followers became enlightened while listening to the Lord Buddha's Dhamma. They had correctly stationed their heart in the present, without concern for past or future; being wholly receptive and ready to experience the taste of Dhamma that the Lord was presenting.

The Lord first *went forth into homelessness* greatly aroused by Dhamma. Even prior to this he had had a growing fascination and concern, originating with his successive encounters with the four *deva-dutas* — the sights of the old man, the sick man, the dead man, and the holy man. From the first day of his going forth he labored with great effort and determination through the austere practices, always committed to his task up to the day of his Enlightenment. He thought neither to abandon his undertaking nor to slacken in his pursuit. The laziness, discouragement and weakness prevailing over the hearts of all other sentient beings could not overcome him.

The *noble disciples* also went forth with conscientiousness and the intention to find freedom from suffering, following the example of the Lord. They attended to each word of the Lord's Dhamma and put it into practice with devotion. Their staying, their coming or going, were always accompanied by mindfulness. Every facet of exertion went together with reflection and application of the principles of truth. The results and the rewards of their concern and dedication seem to contrast with those of our time. This is due to the immense difference in the appreciation of Dhamma and the intensity of practice. It's then obvious that the results can't possibly be the same.

The Lord Buddha didn't relent or relax in his quest from the first day of his endeavor to the day of his Enlightenment. It was on finally reaching his goal that he became the *Great Teacher*<sup>2</sup> of the world. He then brought the Dhamma out to the Buddhist Community — teaching and urging them to follow the path of Dhamma by which he himself had succeeded. Those who received what was revealed by the Lord, delighted in the essence of Dhamma. By taking it up and applying it in their practice, in due course they had all variously come to Dhamma attainments; acquiring the *Dhamma Eye* like the Lord had before them.

The Lord Buddha became the model and ideal for the Buddhist Community right from the beginning. This is made plain from the way he practiced, by always spending his time living away in the forest. When he renounced the home life, he went forth into the forest and no longer took any interest in people; including those in the realm he had once ruled over with peace and security. No longer being concerned with his princely status he courageously and unflinchingly stood up to the ordeal of his exertions. In this respect, no one can surpass the Lord, for every mode of his practice transcended the world. His renunciation and going forth into homelessness differed from the usual way of the world, so when the results appeared they also differed. They were now of two disparate 'worlds', for his heart had been transformed into the purified heart of a Buddha. His accomplishments stood in distinct contrast to the rest of the world.

This was also true for the *noble disciples* who had gone forth following the Lord Buddha. They rejoiced and delighted on hearing the Lord present the basic, fundamental guidelines:

*"Rukhamuulasenaasana.m nissaaya pabbajjae tathavo yaavajiva.m ussahokaraniyo."*

We could express this in our own words:

"Look, over there! There's a mountain and a deep jungle; mountainsides and gorges, brooks and streams, cliffs, peaks and mountain slopes. There are the water courses and banks of mountain rivers. These are places of ease and quietude, free from all forms of entanglement. Seek for such areas and strive there amongst such scenes."

"The *Tathagata* attained his Buddhahood from these settings and surroundings, not through socializing and mingling together. He didn't become enlightened by indulging in frivolity and merriment, by trailing in the flow of desire, self-seeking ambitions and obsessions, and allowing himself to be dragged away under the authority of defilements and desires. On the contrary, the *Tathagata* came to his Enlightenment in secluded and deserted places. Those were the spots where he made his great effort, escaping from his palace and city and all their manner of peoples. The *Tathagata* went through hardship and adversity that was born and derived from his exertion in those secluded and remote places. Enlightenment didn't come to him amidst the grandeur and magnificence of palaces, or amongst the crowds at crossroads or market places. It came to him in solitude and seclusion, totally retired from the world. The *Tathagata* accomplished and arrived at the state of purity of a Buddha in these outlying places."

"May all of you therefore turn towards these places that the *Tathagata* has described. The mountains, hillsides, caves, and shady trees; the deep forests and the distant open spaces where the air is light and clear. These spots are deserted and quiet, free from confusions and troubles, forsaken by people. If you all aspire to the state free from suffering then you must follow the route of the *Tathagata* to those places. Then you too will definitely, one day, also reach the ending of lives and existences, the (quenching) of the glowing coals in the pit of repeated births and deaths."

What I've just explained was, in fact, the second of the basic guidelines. The first directive was:

*"Pa.msakuula ciivara.m..."*

"All of you who have gone forth should seek for discarded materials left in cemeteries or along the road sides. Stitch and sew them together to make your lower robe, upper robe and outer robe; so they may be used to cover and protect your body, sustaining the holy life from day to day. This will accord with your recluship and spartan life following the way of Dhamma. Subsist frugally on the four requisites of living — food, shelter,



clothing and medicine — and be content with little, satisfied with whatever requisites accrue without indulgence in excess and lavish wastefulness. You may however, accept the gift of robes presented by lay devotees as long as it is the way of simplicity and moderation. One causes oneself to be easily fed and cared for without causing problems and concerns for the faithful supporters."

The third of the guidelines was:

"*Pi.n.diyaalopabhojana... .*"

"Having gone forth in the *religion*<sup>3</sup> you can't afford to be lazy. Go on an *almsround*,<sup>4</sup> feeding yourself by your own effort and on your own two feet with a pure and honest heart. The faithful devotees willingly and happily offer the gift of food following the *samana's* tradition, avoiding the usual worldly bargaining with money. The going for alms in order to support yourself is the pure and impeccable livelihood for one who has gone forth. You should try to maintain this practice for the rest of your life. Any occasions of abundance and excess should be considered exceptional circumstances, when you need to oblige the laity. Any shower of gifts, however, must never be taken heedlessly, complacently thinking that they indicate your honor and dignity. They would then be transformed into *gifts and offerings that kill the unworthy*<sup>5</sup> [as the bait hooks the fish]."

The fourth instruction was: "*Gilaanabhesajja... .*"

This refers to medicine for curing the sickness that can, depending on conditions, afflict both monks and lay people. The remedy needs to accommodate to and measure up with the particular situation as if it were its shadow. However, know and exercise moderation in requesting assistance from relatives or those supporters who volunteer their service. You must keep it well within the bounds of propriety.

Knowing moderation is the necessary quality that all who have gone forth must bear in mind. He then becomes *sangha sobhana*, a graceful recluse who adorns the religion with refinement and beauty, being well received by fellow Buddhists and the public everywhere. The important point for a monk to remember is to be always prudent and wary of immoderation in soliciting anything at all. (The *going for alms* is special in this regard because it's a suitable daily observance for monks and novices.) Never make a habit of visiting and seeking aid from lay people, but rather exercise moderation in response to the given situation.

After hearing and accepting these fundamental Dhamma guidelines from the Lord Buddha, the noble disciples all gladly practiced them with zealous dedication. Each went their separate ways into the seclusion and solitude of the forests and mountains, unhindered by concern for life and well being. Whatever their family backgrounds — some were even kings and princes — none asserted their status and position. That would have only activated pride and snobbery, and contempt for (the quality of) those requisites of living that the ordinary lay supporters were able to provide. The noble disciples welcomed any kind of food — save that set aside under the *vinaya* code — for the sake of sustaining their life processes and supporting a steady Dhamma practice. They were mindful of their exertion, their practical duties and observances. They were attracted to quiet and secluded surroundings, far away from noise, confusion and all disturbing influences. They continued with steady endeavor by both day and night and in all postures. For them nothing was more worthwhile and rewarding than the practice that would rid them of suffering.

All the noble disciples considered freedom from suffering as the priceless Dhamma. It went beyond any gains that repeated births and deaths could show, for those all originated in the deceit of *ignorance*,<sup>6</sup> which is the root source of the constant suffering of all sentient beings. The total dedication of the noble disciples meant that neither pride of royal blood and wealthy family, nor pride of scholarship and erudition, could infiltrate their hearts. For this reason all of them, from the first to the last *arahant* disciple, were able to gain Enlightenment following the Lord Buddha.

May all you who practice therefore turn your attention to the reports describing the Lord Buddha and his *arahant* disciples. Consider how their practicing came to success, how they achieved renown and were revered by all sections of the world — including those of the heavenly *deva* realms. The Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha cannot be surpassed for wisdom, discernment and accomplishment. They reign supreme, so let us all carefully consider this. Being easily discouraged and obsessed with food and sleep are not ways to nobility and freedom from suffering. They can't make the supreme Dhamma manifest within the field of our awareness, which is our heart.

In every movement and posture, always give heed to reason and be constantly observant of your actions. Make sure that these actions don't cause delay or 'stain' your body, speech and heart. Delight in seclusion and solitude, and totally commit your efforts of both body and heart to the Dhamma work. Let a dogged determination be your guide through every thought and movement, always pointing to the goal — *freedom from suffering*. The outcome is then assuredly equivalent to that found by the Lord Buddha and the noble disciples, since it follows the same path.

The Lord Buddha did not present the Dhamma teaching — about right view and right thought, for instance — to just anyone. It was aimed specifically at all those who practice the way of *moral precepts, samadhi and wisdom*. Having once stepped out along the Path that the Lord pointed out by living and practicing in accord with the fundamental guidelines that we've already discussed — *rukhamuula senaasana.m* or living at the foot

of trees is another example — there can only be one result. It is freedom from suffering and reaching to the natural prominence of a noble disciple of the Lord Buddha, which is the state of purity within the heart.

Whatever your posture, whatever you're doing, always be mindful — the only exception being during sleep when it's beyond one's means. Incline yourself towards applying mindfulness and wisdom with strenuous effort. The reality of deliverance will then appear within the heart.

During the Lord Buddha's time people listened to Dhamma with earnest interest, securing the Dhamma they heard within their mind. They didn't allow the Dhamma to slip away and disperse; nor did they listen merely for courtesy's sake, treating it more as a ritual. Whatever people do nowadays — and that includes all you monks here — seems to become mere ritual. Without true dedication and firm determination everything you attempt will insensibly turn into ritual.

For instance, to walk along your meditation path just to keep up with a set schedule becomes ritualistic. The question is whether the heart and mindfulness are in harmony with your exertion. Consequently, the end results may very well be different from what was expected. Why should it be so? It's because, even though we may be 'walking meditation', the heart is elsewhere, occupied with every other thing except the Dhamma-theme. What is this principle of Dhamma? It is *always to be mindful* while striving in one's practice.

The heart together with mindfulness may drift and wander; drawn away by the allure and fascination of other places and objects rather than being focused in the object taken up. This indicates that the *flow of the heart* is already going astray. Whether your practice is one of samadhi or investigation, the ensuing results must be contrary to Dhamma — being something else altogether.

Such is the way when we are not observant of our actions, and strive in the practice more for *practice's sake* or from a sense of obligation. We might then fall into wrong view and criticize the religion, disparaging the Lord Buddha's Dhamma Teaching as not being the true *Niyyanika Dhamma*, unable to lead us away from suffering. And that it's unequal to its claim of being the *Well-taught Dhamma*. The reality is that the flow of our heart is constantly, by both day and night, pulling toward the world. So please bear in mind that the world, whether the inner or the external world, is different from Dhamma. The endeavor of the Lord Buddha and all the noble disciples is aimed at the Dhamma principle as the deliverance from suffering. Consequently, every turn of their exertion was for the erasing of 'stains' until they were totally removed and came to *Buddho* — to which the world pays homage and respect. They had attained to the summit of Dhamma because their practices accorded with Dhamma. This has to be the outcome when the means and ends come together in complete harmony.

For us though, we may be walking on our meditation path or sitting in samadhi practice but our samadhi is merely a *stump-like samadhi*. This is when we actually fall asleep right in that samadhi practice. We may do this many times — and it may even become routine for some people, although I personally can't confirm it. Yet it does seem quite probable going by the results people manage to get. If the *cause* accords with Dhamma, then the *result* can't be otherwise. Both the means and ends must correspond.

It must be because we don't practice following the principles of Dhamma. Instead of walking or sitting in meditation — with mindfulness in tune with our exertion and the Dhamma theme or *processes*<sup>7</sup> under investigation — the heart turns aside. The *flow of the heart* goes chasing after forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects. Furthermore, the mental *objects*<sup>8</sup> conceived in the heart are also about forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile objects, whether they be past or future. The heart never stays with the present for even a single moment. If this is the case, the results must always be mundane and commonplace, since the flow of the heart is constantly involved with worldly affairs. The heart for its part will also remain mundane, acting as the *source* of suffering that afflicts us with trouble and hardship. We consequently find fault with that which results: "*Why should there be anxiety and worry? Why am I miserable today?*" We never consider that it's we ourselves who perpetually instigate this unpleasantness by running at cross-purposes with Dhamma. That's why the outcome has to be as it is.

For this reason, all of us who practice must constantly secure within our minds the resolution to be free from suffering. We must never allow our actions done through body, speech and mind to deviate from the teaching of the Lord Buddha. He taught us to seek for seclusion and solitude in the deep forests that are appropriate and conducive to our exertion. There were no exhortations to go live and practice in the market, at the crossroads, or in crowded places packed with people. As if such places would instantly enable us to arrive at the safe haven free from suffering. We must consider what this *living at the root of a tree*<sup>9</sup> really means.

Every facet of the Dhamma Teaching expounded by all the Buddhas has behind it sound and justifiable reason. It is the basis for truth, bringing benefit to those who observe and practice it. This is why the story of the Lord Buddha and the noble disciples — how they cultivated the Way and came to the ultimate accomplishment, becoming great teachers for the whole world — is a story of great wonder and marvel.

Yet, however great a Teacher they may be, the teaching can't always hit home. For us, the vital point is to take the Dhamma — the principle of truth and reason that is the essence of the Great Teacher — as that which will give us constant instruction. Every action will then be made known to our teacher, which is our own heart. This must, without neglect or absent-mindedness, always be borne in mind. Otherwise we will never manage to keep to our course and survive, but will squander time worthlessly. Don't allow the idea that one particular day or

night, whether past, present or future, is somehow exceptional or unusual. It's still that regular sort of day or night. The defilements don't depend on time but are concerned with the heart and all related states and conditions. This is the crucial fact. Please investigate it.

Wherever you go always make sure the great Teacher leads as the guide. Whether sitting, lying down, standing or walking, mindfulness must be there with each posture. Without a basis in mindfulness and wisdom, calm of heart and clear discernment cannot arise. This is because mindfulness, wisdom and diligent effort form the surrounding protective barrier and are the elements that substantiate them. As we tread the path through our strenuous effort, we keep within the guidelines of *precepts, samadhi and wisdom*. This is all that is required. We will then experience the realm free from suffering right within our own heart — without having to ask anyone else about it. Regardless of time, if the *Well-taught Dhamma* is still extant in the world, and if the one listening to it takes it up for study by dedicatedly practicing following its instruction, the result can only be freedom from suffering. This will be clearly perceived in their heart. Please keep this in mind, and correct the problem there, otherwise you'll steadily regress and will fail to accomplish anything.

With mindfulness and a continual probing with wisdom into the *natural things and processes*<sup>10</sup> — the body for example — you'll constantly come across extraordinary (new) understanding. On the other hand, if your effort is unsettled and spasmodic the forthcoming results will similarly be deficient. Therefore, really try to cultivate and develop mindfulness and wisdom up to a steady awareness and discernment. This will definitely contribute to samadhi, the firmness and stability of heart, and to a genuine wisdom that follows from investigating the four *Foundations of Mindfulness* and the four *Noble Truths*. Please also understand that both the *Foundations of Mindfulness* and the *Noble Truths* are *dharmas of the present*, which are constantly manifesting here and now, within our body and heart.

In the *Middle Way of Practice* (which is the *Noble Eightfold Path*) the Lord detailed *right view*.<sup>11</sup> There are *right views* concerning things in general, more specific things, and the really subtle aspects of Dhamma.

The *right views* of ordinary Buddhists deal especially with the conviction that virtuous deeds and wrongdoing, good and evil, really do exist. And that those performing such actions must reap the corresponding results, either of good or evil. This is one level of *right view*.

The more specific (*right*) *view* is of those who take up the practice and, using wisdom, investigate the four *Foundations of Mindfulness* and the four *Noble Truths*. Here one examines the body, feeling, *citta* and *dhamma* in terms of the *three marks*<sup>12</sup> — that they are all intrinsically bound up with impermanence, suffering and not-self.

Build up your faith and firm conviction in Truth and Dhamma through investigating the *three marks* inherent within *all things*<sup>13</sup> and by making that the course for wisdom to follow. Moreover, explore the Noble Truths to realize that suffering — that which arises in body and heart, in both oneself and all other beings — is something that one can't afford to remain complacent about. Recognize the harm caused by the *Source*<sup>14</sup> that generates the immeasurable suffering that all creatures must endlessly endure. Then you'll be ready to dismantle and undo that *Source*, using wisdom to arrive at *Cessation*<sup>15</sup> which is the sphere of the total ending of suffering.

The level of *right view* on these subtler aspects of Dhamma deals with correctly seeing the *Truth of Suffering*, its *Source*, its *Cessation* and the *Way*, which are *precepts, samadhi and wisdom*. This is *right view* void of judgmental opinions concerning the Noble Truths and the *natural processes*<sup>16</sup> everywhere. This is another level of *right view*.

The levels of *right view* vary according to the Dhamma accomplishments of the one practicing. If there was only a single level of *right view* then wisdom would be limited too. Since there are many grades of defilements, many layers of downheartedness and depression, wisdom must have the equivalent levels. It's for this reason that I've been explaining about the varied aspects of *sammaa ditthi or right view*.

The second path factor is *right thought*.<sup>17</sup> There are three categories: the *thought of non-oppression*; the *thought of friendliness*, free from enmity and ill-will; and the *thought that extricates* one from entanglement and bonds.

The *thought of non-oppression* refers to a regard for the welfare of one's fellow creatures, both human and animal alike. However, you will also need to take care of your own well-being by not straining or overburdening yourself. One neither gives thought on how to inflict troubles and hardships on others, nor on how one can indulge in self-destructive habits — like consuming drugs, alcohol or opium and heroin.

These thoughts that go in the direction of non- vindictiveness are really the *not* thinking in malicious and violent terms, whether towards people or animals. One doesn't wish to hurt anyone; or that anyone should be sick, or that they might drop dead. Nor does one think of suicide — killing oneself in the various ways they regularly report in the newspapers. These things happen because they are the fruit of the seed of the original wrong reflection.

One once valued oneself; one thought of oneself as one's most precious resource. Then, because of *wrong thought*, it all turns sour and one now appears as the enemy, one's antagonist. This seems to happen all the time,

and it does so because of wrong thoughts and reasoning. Those who genuinely take care of themselves will immediately act to stop the train of wrong, dangerous thought. As soon as the heart becomes aware of the beginning of such disquiet it will abandon and *let go*<sup>18</sup> those thought concoctions. How could one allow these wrong reflections to get out of hand to the point of committing suicide? It's hardly an example of caring for oneself.

The commonplace ideas of finding a way to cast off the bonds of poverty and want, in order to find abundance and wealth, is also a *thought of renunciation*. So is the thought of involving oneself in actions of *generosity, morality and meditation*.<sup>19</sup> One might think about contributing to the construction of roads, wells or *pagodas*<sup>20</sup>; about maintaining and renovating old and crumbling shrines; about building dwellings and halls for monks, or other structures. This impulsion towards good works in order to extricate oneself from the mass of suffering also comes under *thought of renunciation*.

Another kind of renunciation is the contemplating and the seeing of the peril contained in birth, decay, sickness and death. This being inherent within every form of sentient existence — without exception — one sees the life of *one gone forth* as fulfilling one's own aspiration to develop precepts, samadhi and wisdom. So one resolves to *go forth* as nun, 'white robe', monk or novice.

One who practices, contemplates and investigates his subject of meditation to release the heart from all mental hindrances. He utilizes all the various methods, developed by continuing analysis and reflection, to remove defilements. He steadily eradicates defilements through the various levels right up to the automatic stage of *right thought*. With a constant probing and examining, he will ultimately eliminate all defilements. This is the final category of *right thought* which completes the explanation of this second path factor.

The third path factor was stated as being *right speech*.<sup>21</sup> This includes general speech and specifically that concerned with Dhamma. Passing on aphorisms of the wise that are not detrimental to those who listen; speaking from sound principles that are impressive and eloquent; speaking politely and modestly; and expressing gratitude and appreciation to anyone, of whatever rank, who has shown kindness and support. These can all be classed as one level of *right speech*.

The primary form of *right speech* within the sphere of Dhamma are the *sallekha dhammas*, which are fitted to scour out the defilements. These include:

*Appicchakathaa* — talk favorable to wanting little of the monk's requisites.

*Santu.t.thiikathaa* — talk of contentment with whatever requisites become available and are properly offered according to Dhamma.

*Asa.msaggakathaa* — talk favorable to not mingling together or socializing.

*Pavivekathaa* — talk favorable to seclusion and detachment of body and heart.

*Viriyaarambhakathaa* — talk favorable to strenuous exertion.

*Siilakathaa* — talk favorable to upholding the purity of moral precepts; and to the development of *samadhi* and *wisdom*.<sup>22</sup>

*Vimuttikathaa* — talk favorable to deliverance; and to the clear, penetrative *realization of deliverance*.<sup>23</sup>

These are the subtler aspects of *right speech*. There's no vain talk or gossip here but only serious speech, dedicated to exertion and the utilization of these purifying dhammas.

The fourth path factor was stated as being right action or *right undertaking*.<sup>24</sup> There are those *right actions* that deal with commonplace work and those concerned with the task of Dhamma. Occupations that are not against the law, like farming or trading for example, fall within the bounds of *right undertaking*. Likewise with the building of temples and monasteries, or the practice of generosity, morality and the development of the meditation on *loving kindness*.<sup>25</sup> These form another kind of right action.

Walking meditation and sitting in samadhi are also there as *right action*. Every movement of the body, speech and heart is *kamma*, which is action. The body acts, speech verbalizes and the mind deliberates, and it's all action or *kamma*. Actions done by body, speech and heart are called *kamma*. Those correct and proper bodily actions, speech and thoughts are called *right actions*.

*Right action* covers a wide and extensive range and it's up to each individual to work it out and apply it for himself. This is because the world and Dhamma have always been paired together, like the left and right hands of the same person. The world and Dhamma can't be separated — the world has its work, as has Dhamma. Since the situation and make-up of each person vary, their undertakings cannot all be identical. It's because of this that lay people and those who have *gone forth* following the way of Dhamma, have to undertake work that is appropriate to their position. Don't allow opinions to interfere and conflict with anyone's undertaking; each person will then be able to undertake his or her 'right action'. Each day will then see the world and Dhamma

steadily flourishing together because of everyone's mutual contribution and support.

The fifth path factor was stated as being *right livelihood*.<sup>26</sup> One aspect of this is the eating and consuming that is an everyday form of making a living, whether by humans or animals. Catering to feed the heart with emotional objects born of *contact* is another kind of livelihood. The step by step nourishing of the heart with the various levels of Dhamma is another.

Making one's living in a scrupulous manner that accords with Dhamma, without violating the law by actions like robbery and theft, is one form of *right livelihood*. One lives within one's means from day to day. But if things accrue in abundance and through honest means, then that can also be reckoned as *right livelihood*.

Contact will arise with external objects such as the form, the sound, smell, taste, or touch of man or women. If it suits one's disposition and provides nutriment for the heart with mental and emotional objects that delight and relieve the heart's sadness, then it serves as an elixir of life. However, by pursuing them in the wrong way it becomes poison and devours the heart. This type of *right livelihood* is appropriate for the person in the world who knows the right measure of things, and their suitability and limits.

Sustaining the heart with Dhamma is done by declining to admit entrance to the world's poison to disturb the heart through contact between the sense organs and external objects. Every contact made with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile and mental objects should always be contemplated in the light of Dhamma. Neither a warm welcome nor a hostile rejection should be allowed, for that would bring hardship for the heart. A Dhamma-imbued investigation will provide and sustain the heart with the essence of Dhamma; and it will be gladdened and delighted through both the heart's serenity and its wisdom and discernment. There will then be no seeking after poisonous objects that are ruinous for the heart, rather it will be constantly nourished with Dhamma.

In the light of Dhamma, always try to push the investigation of every contact made between the sense organs and the sense objects towards true understanding and emancipation. Never contemplate in a worldly-minded way, for that will be the taking in of fire to burn oneself with, and it can only cause the heart to overheat. Constantly screen and feed the heart only with objects of Dhamma, and this Dhamma essence will nourish the heart, steadily sustaining and protecting it. What I've been talking about here is one more kind of *right livelihood*.

The sixth path factor was stated as being *right exertion*.<sup>27</sup> There are four ways of exertion:

The effort involved in preventing the accumulation of unwholesomeness within one's character and make up; in getting rid of anything unwholesome that has arisen; in developing and bringing up wholesomeness; and the effort in maintaining that wholesomeness that has already arisen.

These must be *drawn inwards*<sup>28</sup> by applying them to the level of Dhamma that you are actually practicing in, where they will be ready to add to whatever basis of samadhi and wisdom is necessary.

First: Devote yourself to caring for the heart that is so liable to become obsessed and infatuated with the flow of craving. This is based in ignorance and will drag the heart away.

Second: Try to develop precepts, samadhi and wisdom, for these are the *dharmas* capable of rectifying every type of defilement. If you aspire for Nibbana, totally extinguish your burning anxiety.

Third: Don't allow your standard of precepts, samadhi and wisdom to fall back and slip away through negligence. You will need to develop and nourish them to full maturity and to their transmutation into the *supramundane knowledge of the Path*,<sup>29</sup> which erases all defilements, including those lying latent. The sphere of *Freedom*<sup>30</sup> and *Nibbana*, previously perceived as beyond one's capacity, will arise within the heart the instant all the defilements are cleared out.

The seventh path factor was stated as being *right mindfulness*.<sup>31</sup> This is setting up mindfulness to attend to your exertion. Whatever you fix on as the heart's meditation object — "*Buddho*" or mindfulness of breathing for instance — should be the place where mindfulness is established. If you settle on the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* — whether as a basis for samadhi or in the development of wisdom — you must constantly have awareness minding and attending to every round of practice. This is one section of right mindfulness.

The eighth path factor was stated as being *right samadhi*, which is the heart rightly and firmly established in calm. This refers to the samadhi that is imbued with wisdom and not that *stump-like samadhi*. Also, it isn't the addictive sort of samadhi that sticks both day and night and is loath to investigate by way of wisdom. That sort of samadhi may seem, in itself, to be an adequately exalted *dhamma* but wisdom will end up being dismissed as phoney. Samadhi, in this case, is called incorrect or *wrong samadhi*<sup>32</sup> and can't truly deliver one from suffering.

To practice the samadhi that *will* free one from suffering, attention has to be focused on one's selected Dhamma principle or theme, with mindfulness guarding and directing until the heart converges. It doesn't matter too much which class of samadhi this may be — it's the *right or correct samadhi* as long as you feel that the heart has calmed down. It has ceased from concocting amongst the various thought processes, and abides, for a time, singular and distinct from all surrounding conditions, before withdrawing from that state.

This is not the same as that type of samadhi where, once the heart has converged, one loses track of day and night, not knowing if one is alive — and it's as if one is dead. It is only after the heart has emerged that one starts to wonder about what had happened: "*Was it that the heart converged? Wherever did my mind go?*". This is 'stump-like samadhi' because it resembles a stump without any consciousness. Try to avoid and quit this type of samadhi, and if you've already fallen for it then you must immediately extricate yourself.

This *stump-like samadhi* is certainly found among those of us who practice. The remedy is to hold back and break the habitual way the heart tends to converge. If one indulges it then it will always stick with that propensity, so you will have to compel it to break away and 'take a tour' of the body. Mindfulness needs to be firmly in control, traveling up and around and down and around, over and over again until wisdom, *Path and Fruit* are realized.

The kind of samadhi that is *right* samadhi is that which has mindfulness attending to the state of calm, when the heart has converged into samadhi. After the heart has emerged again (out of samadhi), the various *natural conditions*<sup>33</sup> found within the body and mind should be investigated with wisdom. Therefore, with the right occasion and appropriate conditions start up the investigation. Samadhi and wisdom are *dhammas* that should always interrelate and collaborate. Don't allow your samadhi development to drift without giving it the necessary attention.

So, to summarize, one can say that these three *dhammas* — *mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom* — are interrelated and inseparable. They can't move forward alone, for samadhi and wisdom have to take their turns in taking a step, with mindfulness minding and watching over them.

I've discussed these eight path factors partly according to the principles of Dhamma and partly from practical experience. Please note that *right view* through to *right samadhi* are formed from *dhammas* of many different levels. It's up to each of you listening here to take them up and apply them in your own practice. How far you can go depends on your Dhamma understanding and ability.

Regardless of whether you're a lay person or have *gone forth*, with commitment you'll be able to practice for the full development of these eight path factors. The fruits of *Freedom*<sup>34</sup> and *knowledge and insight of Freedom*<sup>35</sup> will then become your most valuable possession. This is because precepts, samadhi and wisdom are integral to this *Path* and they function as the key that clearly reveals these two *Freedom*s to the heart.

Moreover, all of you who practice shouldn't misunderstand and think that *Freedom* and *knowledge of Freedom* are separate from each other or that they perform two different functions. Truly, that's not so. When a man uses an axe to chop up wood, as soon as the wood is cut through he both sees it with his eyes and at the same instant realizes it in his heart. In the same way, *Freedom and knowledge of Freedom* simultaneously allow the seeing and the knowing that the defilements have been excised from the heart, through using precepts, samadhi and wisdom.

Thereafter, there can be no more fussing with problems because all bothersome concerns derive from the conflict between the heart and the defilements. This is the truly great issue of the three realms of existence. By letting go of the heart, which is the cardinal problem, the defilements that are lodged there will spontaneously detach themselves. Furthermore, *sila, samadhi and wisdom, Freedom, and knowledge of Freedom* all remain as they really are. Each side comes to truth, and consequently all the contentious issues come to an end.

Today, I have presented a talk on Dhamma to all of you who practice by highlighting the example of the Lord Buddha and the Noble Disciples. May it serve you as a guide, pointing out the Way so that you can set your compass — your programme of practice — and relentlessly strive to follow the Lord Buddha. Once you have fully developed *sila, samadhi and wisdom*, then *Freedom and knowledge of Freedom*, which is the essence of Nibbana, will undoubtedly be yours.

Therefore, may all of you listening here realize that all these matters are found right here in your body and heart. Please draw Dhamma inwards as your own. Then, both the cultivation of the means and the fruits of *Freedom and Nibbana*, which I have elucidated, will all belong to you, either today or sometime in the future. May this talk on Dhamma now reach its conclusion.

*Evam.* Such is the way.

## Notes

1. This is from an earlier (1962) Dhamma talk given to the monks at Wat Pa Barn Tard. It was a favorite of Khun Pow.
2. *Saasadaa*
3. *Saasanaa*
4. *pi.n.dapaata*
5. *sakkaro purisan hanti.*

- [6. avijjaa](#)
- [7. sabhaava dhamma](#)
- [8. dhammaaramma.na](#)
- [9. rukkhamuula senaasanam](#)
- [10. sabhaava dhammas](#)
- [11. sammaa di.t.thi](#)
- [12. ti-lakkha.na](#)
- [13. sabhaava dhammas](#)
- [14. samudaya](#)
- [15. nirodha](#)
- [16. sabhaava dhammas](#)
- [17. sammaa sa.nkappo](#)
- [18. nekkhamma](#)
- [19. daana, siila and bhaavanaa](#)
- [20. cetiyas](#)
- [21. sammaa vaacaa](#)
- [22. samaadhikathaa and panyaakathaa](#)
- [23. vimutti-nyaa.nadassanakathaa](#)
- [24. sammaa kammanto](#)
- [25. mettaa](#)
- [26. sammaa aajiivo](#)
- [27. sammaa vaayaamo](#)
- [28. opanayiko](#)
- [29. magga nyaa.na](#)
- [30. Vimutti](#)
- [31. sammaa sati](#)
- [32. micchaa samaadhi](#)
- [33. sabhaava dhammas](#)
- [34. Vimutti](#)
- [35. Vimutti Nyaa.nadassana](#)

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## Epilogue □

Mrs. Pow-panga Vathanakul died on September 11th, 1976. She had asked her husband, Mr. Vai Vathanakul, to keep her funeral rites simple and to cremate the body within a few days. (This is the ideal for those who practice Dhamma.) But when the time came her own family insisted on the customary Thai funeral.

Khun Vai, for his part, put together a book to give to family and friends at the funeral. Memorial books are customary on such occasions but Khun Pow had rather preempted this by already distributing, when she ill, some Dhamma books that she had had printed. Khun Vai, however, produced his book with the idea of it being a 'case study'. Four of the Dhamma talks translated above came from this book, and it seems worthwhile here to mention some of the other points that Khun Vai brought together. In many ways they are also highly relevant to Buddhists outside Thailand, living under modern conditions.

Relatives and friends contributed a section about Khun Pow's life and career:

She was born in 1925 in Bangkok and studied there, entering the Accountancy Department of Chulalongkorn University. However, poor health (resulting from a thyroid condition) forced her to cut short her course after only two years. She went out to work for an insurance company in 1946, and was one of the first staff of the newly established firm. Business conditions were difficult in those early days but Khun Pow worked her way up so that in 1948 she was made Secretary to the Board.

The company sent her (and Khun Vai) on study tours abroad to other insurance companies, in India and Europe, and for six months in the U.S.A. The American insurance managers were highly impressed with her "excellent judgment... in underwriting problems..." and considered her "... an unusually capable woman and apt scholar..." (There is even a photograph of her in the men-only executive dining-room of a very large German insurance company, being the second woman to have broken that barrier.)

In 1958 she was made General Manager of the company. Nine years later she stepped down from that post — although staying on as Secretary to the Board — so that she would have more time for Dhamma practice. At that time the company had more than 400 employees with another 400 insurance agents. When, in 1975, she fully retired she had been with the company for almost thirty years, having overseen a large part of the company's growth. She now turned more to concentrate on Dhamma.

In the company she had been renowned for her hard work and discipline, and had expected the same from her workers. She was also known for her care and helpfulness. This is perhaps made evident by the gathering of over a thousand former colleagues and co-workers who came to pay their final respects at her funeral rites. (It had been formally announced in the newspaper as per custom, although no invitations had been sent out to all those individuals.)

Another section concerns Khun Pow's Dhamma practice:

In 1957 Khun Pow started to visit Bangkok monasteries to listen to sermons and join in the meditation. When, for health reasons, she retired from being General Manager she had more time for her Dhamma studies, and a scholar monk at a major Bangkok monastery was designated by the abbot to teach her the third, and then second grade General Dhamma studies. (And she was the only person who managed to pass the second grade examination, at the monastery that year.)

In 1970 a friend gave Khun Pow a Dhamma book about the meditation masters in the North east of Thailand. She was deeply impressed and when one of them, the Ven. Acharn Maha Boowa, visited Bangkok she went to pay her respects and asked permission to go and stay at Wat Pa Bahn Tahd. On first going to a jungle monastery she found herself too frightened to come out of her room at night, but after listening to the Dhamma teaching she became determined to return every few months to practice. She also decided not to go for her grade one General Dhamma (book) studies, but to concentrate on putting those studies into practice.

Khun Pow, with Khun Vai's agreement, started to keep the Eight Precepts on the Observance Days. When business pressures — guests from abroad for instance — made this difficult, she would simply keep them on another day. To help make such days more suitable for meditation practice at home, one upstairs room was set aside and dubbed '*Ekasatarn*'. (Meaning 'a place to be alone', and also sounding as if it is the name of a monastery.) Any disturbing telephone calls could then be deflected with the news that, 'Khun Pow had gone to '*Ekasatarn*'. Khun Pow's friends would then assume that she had gone to the monastery, and there would be no need to lie about Khun Pow 'not being at home'.

In 1971, Khun Pow thought back upon the help given to her by her teacher in Dhamma studies, the scholar monk in the central Bangkok monastery, and offered to sponsor his further (M.A.) studies at the Banares University in India. (Since that time, this monk has become one of the most well known scholars in Thailand.)

By 1974 Khun Pow was spending much more time away in the north eastern meditation monasteries, and decided that the following year she would spend the whole of the three month Rains Retreat period up there. Back home, a small hut had been made in the garden, beneath a tree and with a view of the nearby pond. That was where she retired to, for she was now regularly keeping the Eight Precepts. She and Khun Vai decided that it was also time for her to fully retire from the company, which she did in 1975, and she was then ready to go on the three month's retreat that year.

Khun Pow had always been bedeviled with health problems that resulted in many stays in hospital. These included operations on the womb, the gall bladder and the breast. This last treatment concluded with radiation therapy that seemed to clear things up in 1975. However, that July, when she was already settled in the monastery for the Rains Retreat, she met a fellow devotee who was also a doctor. The doctor noticed that Khun Pow's eyes were yellow (with jaundice?) and so advised her quickly to go to Bangkok for treatment.

Eventually, after many tests and a final bone biopsy, it was confirmed that this time the cancer had penetrated to the bone marrow, and that no further treatment was possible. When Khun Pow knew that the cancer was terminal, she asked permission to go and practice Dhamma at Wat Pa Bahn Tahd. She arrived there in October and Ven. Acharn Maha Boowa gave her a Dhamma talk virtually every evening, for over 130 days. Other



devotees were also staying there with her, one being a lady doctor, and when her condition made it necessary to be nearer the hospital she returned to Bangkok.

When Khun Pow was home again, she and Khun Vai decided that they would be fellow Dhamma farers, rather than husband and wife. She asked him to help remind her about Dhamma, to awaken her mindfulness, in the coming days. Khun Vai therefore prepared some appropriate Dhamma verses and set himself the task of giving as much spiritual support as he could. He was able to sit with her and prayed and meditated. When Khun Pow could not read anymore, he would read aloud and tape some of the important Dhamma teachings for her to listen and meditate on.

Khun Pow went into a semi-coma, but when she became more conscious, Khun Vai was there to repeat some words of Dhamma. He then thought a better way would be to use the original voices, by using a tape machine. So he arranged tapes of the morning and evening chanting (that Khun Pow had always recited and found so inspiring); and a tape of the final Dhamma talk — the farewell night — that Khun Pow had listened to at Wat Pa Bahn Tahd. There were also tapes of Dhamma chants and verses that Khun Pow particularly liked: such as *The First Sermon* of the Lord Buddha, the *Turning of the Dhamma Wheel*, with its explanation about the Four Noble Truths. And the *Discourse on the Highest Blessing*.

By the time that Khun Vai had arranged the tapes, Khun Pow's condition was obviously deteriorating. The oxygen tubes that she had resolutely refused and pushed away, wanting to be left unencumbered in her final moments, had now been reinserted by the nurses. This showed for certain that she had to be unconscious. Khun Vai started a cycle of tapes and within a few moments Khun Pow's hands were lifted together in *anyjali*, the traditional gesture of respect and veneration. The hands fell back... and were then raised again, palms together, over the heart. Khun Vai was delighted with this sign that the Dhamma was penetrating, even though Khun Pow was in a coma. He therefore arranged for the tapes to be continually interchanged using two machines. The *Turning of the Dhamma Wheel* sounded, with words about the heart of one who practices, how knowledge and light arise, and how by going beyond all attachment there is the Undying Dhamma.

Khun Pow appeared calm but her breathing became irregular. Khun Vai sat close by and quietly meditated; and as her breathing faltered he asked everyone in the room to stay still and not to cry, and for nobody else to come in. As they meditated, the sound of the breathing gradually diminished. And was still.

Khun Vai collected all the above to be a 'case study' about an ordinary person taking up the practice of Dhamma. (And it should not be too difficult for westerners to relate to someone like Khun Pow.) Khun Vai himself is something of a 'case study' too. He was Khun Pow's business colleague throughout, successfully overcame a major cancer operation and, more to the point, is a devout Christian.

It's said that Khun Vai would accompany Khun Pow to the Buddhist monastery and everyone who didn't know would think he was a Buddhist too. It was much the same when Khun Pow (occasionally) went with Khun Vai to church. Religion for him is not just Christianity, for he sees much value in Dhamma and fully supported his wife in her practice. With his wife's death he was keenly aware that both faiths are concerned with suffering — death and separation from the person one loves — and how to deal with that truth.

Khun Vai has been a leading member of the YMCA — he's now President Emeritus of the YMCA in Bangkok — and has addressed various international meetings, often concerning his understanding of religion. He has spoken about how he sees a similarity between Christianity and Buddhism. On the basic level, he compares the Buddhist *generosity* and *moral precepts*, with the Christian *Commandments* and *love*. Or "*Love in action for all faiths and beliefs*." Then he says, "Whereas for spiritual higher attainment, we have to leave to each person depending on his or her belief to pursue."

It is now fifteen years since Khun Pow's death, yet the Dhamma Teachings she received and practiced are still available to those who want to develop their own 'case study'.

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## Glossary □

The language used in these talks is that of Forest Dhamma. This means that apart from some *Paali* quotations — usually taken from the chants that many of the listeners would be familiar with, and most of the monks would have learned by heart — it is usually ordinary Thai. Many Thai words are rooted in *Paali* and this can be seen in their spelling. However, both the present pronunciation and the meaning of the word have often been transformed. Forest Dhamma therefore should not be treated as if it was classical *Paali*, and scholars should beware of trying to track definitions through the text. It's important to remember that this is an oral teaching, which afterwards was warmed up between pages.

**Acharn** (Thai); **aacariya** (Pali): (meditation) teacher.

**Akaaliko**: not delayed; timeless. A quality of Dhamma.

**Akusala**: In Pali it means unwholesome, demeritorious. It is part of a piece ritually chanted at funerals and therefore is given another Forest Dhamma meaning: un-clever, unskilled. See *kusala*.

**Amata:** the deathless state; the Undying; *Nibbaana*; immortal; ambrosia.

**Anaagaamii:** a never-returner; nonreturner. See *Ariya*.

**Appanaa:** See *Samaadhi*.

**Arahant:** worthy one; one who has attained *Nibbaana*. See *Ariya*.

**Ariya:** Noble One. It has four stages, with Path (*magga*) and Fruit (*phala*) for each stage: *Sotaapanna*; *Sakadaagaamii*; *Anaagaamii*; *Arahant*.

**Arom** (Thai); **aaramma.na** (Pali): The original Pali means: sense-objects; an object of consciousness. Modern Thai: mood, temper, spirits, disposition. In this work it is an important term and is translated as: preoccupation, mood, emotional object, object.

**Attaa:** self; soul; ego; personal entity. (contrast *anattaa*.) Mind; the whole personality, as in the phrase from the *Dhammapada*: "*Attaa hi attano naatho, kahi naatho paro siyaa?*". This is concerned with *attaadhipateyya*, which is self-dependence and self-reliance, and a central theme of these Dhamma talks.

**Avijjaa:** ignorance; nescience; lack of knowledge; delusion.

**Bahn** (Thai): village.

**Bahp** (Thai); **paapa** (Pali): evil, wrong action; demerit; bad; base; wicked. (contrast *boon*.)

**Bhaavanaa:** heart/mind development; meditation.

**Boon** (Thai); **punya** (Pali): merit; meritorious (-action); virtue; righteousness; good works; good. (contrast *bahp*.)

**Brahmacariya:** the Holy life; religious life; strict chastity.

**Buddha:** the Awakened One; Enlightened One.

**Buddho:** often used as a meditation word ('mantra') "*Buddho...*", being the recollection of Buddha. (See *kamma.t.thaana*.)

**Citta:** (Pali); *Chit, chit-chai* (Thai): heart; mind. A central term. In *To the Last Breath* it is usually translated as 'heart', while in *Directions for Insight* it is more often 'mind'. (In fact it is more like 'heart-mind'.) For similar usage in the *Suttas* see: *Mano, Citta, Vinyaa.na*; R. Johannson; *University of Ceylon Review. Peredeniya. Vol. 23. 1965.*

**Daana:** giving; alms-giving; charity; generosity; benevolence. See Appendix.

**Dhamma:** the Teachings (of the Buddha); the Truth; the Supramundane; virtue. dhamma: thing; phenomenon; nature; condition.

**Dhaatu:** an element; natural condition; earth, water, fire and air.

**Di.t.thi:** view; opinion; (often) wrong view.

**Dosa:** hatred; anger; ill-will; aversion.

**Dukkha:** suffering. See *Noble Truths*.

**Ehipassiko:** inviting to come and see; inviting inspection. An attribute of Dhamma.

**Kamma.t.thaana:** subjects of meditation; the act of meditation. The subjects often mentioned in this book are: *Buddhaanussati* — recollection of the Buddha; contemplation on the virtues of the Buddha. *Kaayagataasati* — mindfulness occupied with the body; contemplation on the 32 impure parts of the body. *AAnaapaanasati* — mindfulness on breathing. (For more see *A. I. 30,41; Vism. 197*.) It is also sometimes used as a general term describing the way of practice of meditation monks in N.E. Thailand.

**Khandha:** aggregate; category. Usually the Five Aggregates: *ruupa; vedanaa; sanyaa; sa.nkhaara; vinyaa.na*.

**Khun** (Thai): The equivalent of Mr., Mrs., or Ms.

**Kilesa:** defilements; impurities; impairments. These include: greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, wrong view, doubt or uncertainty, sloth, restlessness, shamelessness, lack of moral concern.

**Kusala:** wholesome; meritorious; moral; skillful. It is part of a piece ritually chanted at funerals and therefore is given another Forest Dhamma meaning: clever, skilled. See *akusala*.

**Magga:** the Path; the Way. See *Noble Truths*.

**Maagha-puuja:** Worship on the Full-Moon Day of the third lunar month in commemoration of the Great Assembly of Disciples.

**Ma.ngala (Sutta):** auspicious; (the thirty-eight) blessings.

**Maara:** the Evil One; Death; the Tempter; Defilements personified.

**Mettaa:** loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill.

**Moha:** delusion; ignorance; dullness.

**Naama:** mind; name; mental factors; mentality. See *ruupa*.

**Nyaa.na:** knowledge; wisdom; insight.

**Nyaa.nadassana:** knowing and seeing, perfect knowledge; vision through wisdom.

**Nekkhamma:** renunciation; letting go; giving up the world; self- denial.

**Nibbaana:** the extinction of the fires of greed, of hatred and of ignorance; the extinction of all defilements and suffering; the Unconditioned.

**Nirodha:** cessation. See *Noble Truths*.

**Niivara.na:** the (five) hindrances; obstacles.

**Noble Truths:** *Dukkha:* suffering; misery; woe; discontent; anguish; anxiety; pain. *Samudaya:* the Cause, Origin or Source of Suffering; *Nirodha:* the Cessation or Extinction of Suffering. *Magga:* the Path; the Way; the Noble Eightfold Path.

**Opanayiko:** worthy of inducing in and by one's own mind; worthy of realizing; to be tried by practice; leading onward. An attribute of Dhamma.

**Paali:** the language of the texts of the Theravada Canon.

**Panyaa (Pali/Thai):** wisdom. Often coupled with mindfulness. See *sati*.

**Paaramii:** (the ten) Perfections; stages of spiritual perfection on the path to Awakening.

**Parikamma:** (Pali: preliminary action, preparation.) Thai: preparatory meditation, such as the (silent) repetition of "Buddho".

**Parinibbaana:** the Final Passing Away of the Lord Buddha; final release.

**Pariyatti:** the Scriptures; study of them; the Teachings to be studied.

**Patipatti:** putting into practice.

**Pativedha:** penetration; realization; insight.

**Pa.tisandhi-vinyaa.na:** relinking; rebirth; reunion; conception.

**Phala:** fruit; result; consequence; effect. See *magga*.

**Pi.n.dapaata:** food received in the alms-bowl (of a Bhikkhu); alms- gathering; to go on an almsround.

**Puujaa:** worship (external and mental); honor; veneration; devotional offering.

**Puthujjana:** a worldlying; worldly person; ordinary person. As opposed to *ariya*.

**Ruupa:** matter; form; material; body; shape; corporeality. See *naama*.

**Sabhaava dhamma:** principle of nature; natural condition; natural phenomenon.

**Sacca (-Dhamma):** truth, truthfulness; Truth.

**Saddhaa:** faith; confidence.

**Sakadaagaamii:** a once-returner. See *ariya*.

**Sakkaaya-di.t.thi:** (the delusion of) self-view; belief in a personal self.

**Samaadhi:** concentration; one-pointedness of mind; the condition of mind when focused, centered and still.

**Sama.na:** recluse; holy one; a Buddhist monk.

**Sammati; Sammuti** (Thai/Pali): conventional; mundane; supposed; assumed; generally accepted.

**Samudaya:** Cause. See *Noble Truth*.

**Sa.myojana:** (the ten) Fetters (that bind to the round of rebirth).

**Sa.ngha (Saavaka Sa.ngha):** (the noble) community, one of the Three Jewels; the Order.

**Sa.nkappo:** thought.

**Sankhaara:** determinations; compounded things; mental formations (see *Khandha*). In Forest Dhamma this is the processing, concocting and fabricating of thoughts.

**Sanyaa:** perception; idea; ideation; (see *Khandha*). In Forest Dhamma this is the aspect of remembering (past perceptions).

**Sara.na:** refuge; help; protection; guide; remembrance.

**Saranagamana:** taking refuge (in the Three Jewels); going for refuge.

**Saasada** (Thai), **Satthu** (Pali): the Master; the Great Teacher (the Lord Buddha).

**Saasana:** teaching; message; doctrine; a religion.

**Sati:** mindfulness; awareness; attentiveness. In Forest Dhamma it is often coupled with wisdom (*panyaa*). (In Thai common usage *sati-panya* means: intelligence; intellect.)

**Saavaka:** a (noble) disciple; hearer; follower.

**Siila:** virtue; morality; moral conduct; a precept; training rule. See Appendix.

**Sotaapanna:** a stream-enterer; one who has attained the first stage of *Ariya*.

**Sugato:** Well-gone; Well-farer; sublime. An epithet of Buddha.

**Sukha:** happiness; ease; joy; comfort; pleasure; physical or bodily happiness or ease. As opposed to *dukkha*.

**Sutta:** a discourse from the Pali Canon.

**Svaakkhaata:** well-taught; well proclaimed. An attribute of Dhamma.

**Ta.nhaa:** craving; desire; thirst.

**Tapa:** exertion; ascetic practice; (burning out).

**Tathaagata:** the Accomplished One; the Thus-come; the Thus-gone. An epithet of the Lord Buddha. Sometimes used as a pronoun when the Lord Buddha is quoted as saying something himself.

**Ti-lakkha.na:** the Three Characteristics, Marks or Signs; also called the Common Characteristics, viz., impermanence, suffering and not-self.

**Upaadaana:** attachment; clinging; grasping; holding.

**Uposatha:** Observance Day (for the monks).

**Va.t.ta (-cakka):** the round of rebirth, of existences; (the cycle or wheel of rebirth).

**Vedanaa:** feeling. See *Khandha*.

**Vimutti (-nyaanadassana):** deliverance; release; liberation; freedom; (knowledge of that deliverance).

**Vinyaa.na:** consciousness. See *Khandha*.

**Viriya:** effort; energy; vigour; endeavor; exertion.

**Visuddhi:** purity; purification.

**Wat** (Thai): a monastery.

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## Appendix: The Gradual Teaching □

As this book is mainly concerned with meditation, here are some *Sutta* passages with descriptions of generosity (*daana*) and moral precepts (*siila*).

### **Daana: Generosity**

In contrast to the modern emphasis on consuming and possessing, the Lord Buddha spoke of the virtue of giving and being content with whatever one has. There are always circumstances where one can give. For instance, one can offer one's time, help and sympathy. And one can for-give.

If one has wealth, he explained the use of possessions; the benefits which one should get from wealth; reasons for earning and having wealth:

- i) to make oneself, one's parents, children, wife, servants and workmen happy and live in comfort.
- ii) to share this happiness and comfort with one's friends.
- iii) to make oneself secure against all misfortunes.
- iv) to make the fivefold offering:
  - to relatives, by giving help to them.
  - to guests, by receiving them.
  - to the departed, by dedicating merit to them.
  - to the king, (i.e., to the government) by paying taxes and duties and so on.
  - to the deities, i.e., those beings who are worshipped according to one's faith.
- v) to support those monks and spiritual teachers who lead a pure and diligent life.

(A.III.45)

### **Sappurisa Daana: Gifts of a good man**

- i) to give clean things.
- ii) to give choice things.
- iii) to give at fitting times.
- iv) to give suitable things.
- v) to give with discretion.
- vi) to give repeatedly or regularly.
- vii) to calm one's mind on giving.
- viii) to be glad after giving.

(A.IV.243)

### **Siila: Precepts**

The basic guidelines for the actions and speech of any Buddhist can be appreciated by anyone, of any religion or none. There is no dogma involved, it is a plain and simple way of living without harming or hurting any creature.

The other feature to bear in mind is that it is accepted voluntarily by the individual. This is not something that one is commanded to receive. It is the individual's volition that changes a list of precepts into a way of living. With that change, the appreciation and mindfulness of one's actions and speech become more subtle and which automatically leads on to meditation.

There are the basic Five Precepts and these become more refined with the Eight Precepts. Everyone who listened to the original Dhamma talks (in this book) would be keeping (at least temporarily) the Eight Precepts.

These Precepts can be received by simply saying:

"I undertake the training rule/precept..."

- i) to abstain from taking life.
- ii) to abstain from taking what is not given.
- \*iii) to abstain from sexual misconduct.
- iv) to abstain from false speech.
- v) to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness."
- \*iii) "to abstain from unchastity.
- vi) to abstain from untimely eating.
- vii) to abstain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, from wearing garlands, smartening with scents, and embellishment with unguents.
- viii) to abstain from the use of high and large luxurious couches."

*[Taken from the Dictionary of Buddhism, compiled by Ven. Phra Debvedi (Prayudh Payutto), Bangkok, B.E. 2528 (1985)]*

## **READ PART 2 - Directions for Insight**

Source :

<http://accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/boowa/straight.html>